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SEE WHAT'S NEW... CHECK OUT OUR LATEST OFFER ON PAGE 50

BELIEB IT OR NOT

NEW MEXICO POLICE LINK JUSTIN BIEBER TO A FAILED MURDER-FOR-HIRE PLOT, WHILE RUMOURS CIRCULATE ABOUT THE BIZARRE DETAILS PAGE 16

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Thursday, December 13, 2012

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WHAT A RELIEF!

Bruce Springsteen, Jon Bon Jovi and drummer Max Weinberg perform at 12-12-12, a concert benefiting he Robin Hood Relief Fund to aid the victims of Hurricane Sandy, at Madison Square Garden in New York City on Wednesday. Also on the bill was a Nirvana reunion, with Paul McCartney filling in for the departed Kurt Cobain. Go to metronews.ca for the story and photos. LARRY BUSACCA/GETTY IMAGES

Gardiner mess riles councillors

Demolition debate. It's a half-billion-dollar fix, but some say they'd rather tear the road down

City councillors are being asked to make a $505-million decision on the fate of the Gardiner Expressway in less than a month and without crucial information.

A $7.7-million study, which council commissioned in 2008, was supposed to investigate whether it makes financial sense to tear down the elevated highway rather than pour millions into deteriorating infrastructure with a limited lifespan. But that report was mysteriously shelved two years ago after Mayor Rob Ford took office.

Now left-wing councillors say they are being asked to make a half-billion-dollar decision blind.

Opponents of Ford say the administration has tried to back them into a corner — and they aren't going to bite.

"The city is being asked to make the biggest road decision it's made in 50 years without any information," said Coun. Gord Perks, who was vice-chair of the public works committee when the study was ordered. "I don't even know if it's legal for us to decide to take it down without (professional) advice."

City staff say that without $505 million in emergency repair funding, parts of the Gardiner will be unsafe to drive on in as little as six years.

This hefty price tag has some councillors asking whether it makes better financial sense to tear down all or parts of the highway. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Rising cost of convenience

Costs for delivering the Presto card to Toronto-area commuters has nearly tripled to $700 million, Ontario's auditor general says PAGE 3

Google me this: What was the top search of 2012?

Nope, not Gangnam Style, but you're close as PSY's hit is in second place. Find out on PAGE 20

UN ballistic over N. Korea's rocket launch

Whether the Security Council's response includes new sanctions is mainly up to China PAGE 14

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Presto smart card cost has ballooned

$700M price tag. Auditor general says card's cost may be among world's most expensive

The cost of delivering the Presto smart card to Toronto area commuters has nearly tripled to $700 million, says the Annual Report of Ontario's auditor general, Jim McCarter.

The auditor said the card may be among the most expensive in the world — and isn't delivering the breezy commute that was promised to Toronto region transit riders.

Metrolinx, the provincial agency charged with delivering the Presto system, says it is already taking steps to contain future Presto costs, and Ontario Transportation Minister Bob Chiarelli defended the system Wednesday, saying he's "very, very pleased with the progress of Presto," given the complexities of working across nine transit systems.

The province contracted a private provider, Accenture, to build the regional fare card and operate the system for 10 years for about $250 million.

Ontario NDP Leader Andrea Horwath accused the Liberal government of being "stubbornly fixated on this particular supplier for this card."

Progressive Conservative transportation critic Frank Klees called Presto a boondoggle and scandal.

The auditor attributed the climbing cost of Presto to a failure to expand on the base Presto system when the TTC and Ottawa signed on. Instead, Metrolinx developed a new, expanded system called Presto Next Generation.

It wasn't even clear, said the report, whether Metrolinx owned the rights to the Presto system.

Since the audit, Metrolinx has signed an agreement giving it intellectual property rights to the system, said CEO Bruce McCuaig. Now the agency is taking steps to contain the Accenture costs.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

System users

- The auditor general's report says only six per cent of regional transit users had signed onto Presto by March — 18 per cent of riders once GO was factored in.
- By September, the numbers had more than doubled to 13 per cent of local bus riders and 60 per cent of GO riders.
- When GO discontinues its passes Jan. 1, Metrolinx expects that 90 per cent of those riders will be using Presto.

Room with a view. World eyes city's skyscrapers

View from Billy Bishop Airport
DAVID COOPER/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Toronto's stretch into the skies is capturing the attention of the world.

Tall-building development here is outpacing every other city in the Western Hemisphere, with 15 skyscrapers exceeding roughly 45 storeys now under construction, according to a new study by the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat.

That means by 2015, Toronto will be home to 44 highrises exceeding 150 metres, more than triple the 13 skyscrapers that graced the city's skyline in 2005, says the Chicago-based clearing house on all the latest in tall-building design and construction.

In a report titled "Canada Rising," the council points to the Great White North's fast-paced push upwards in just the last eight years. And it credits Toronto with "spearheading a countrywide interest in tall building development" that has seen a dramatic shift away from simply highrise office towers to homes in the heavens that are transforming the look and feel of Canada's major cities.

"There's no doubt that Canada is at the forefront of discussion around how to create more vibrant urban centres, increase density and build more sustainable cities," said council spokesperson Kevin Brass.

"Tall buildings are a big part of that." TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Once in a lifetime ... no, really

Sherry Dingwall and Michael Philpotts were one of the 40 couples who chose to marry at City Hall on 12/12/12. Maria Kontra officiated. The couple married at noon, adding another 12 to the trifecta. "I thought we'll have a fantastic commemorative day just to do it all," said Philpotts,.

KEITH BEATY/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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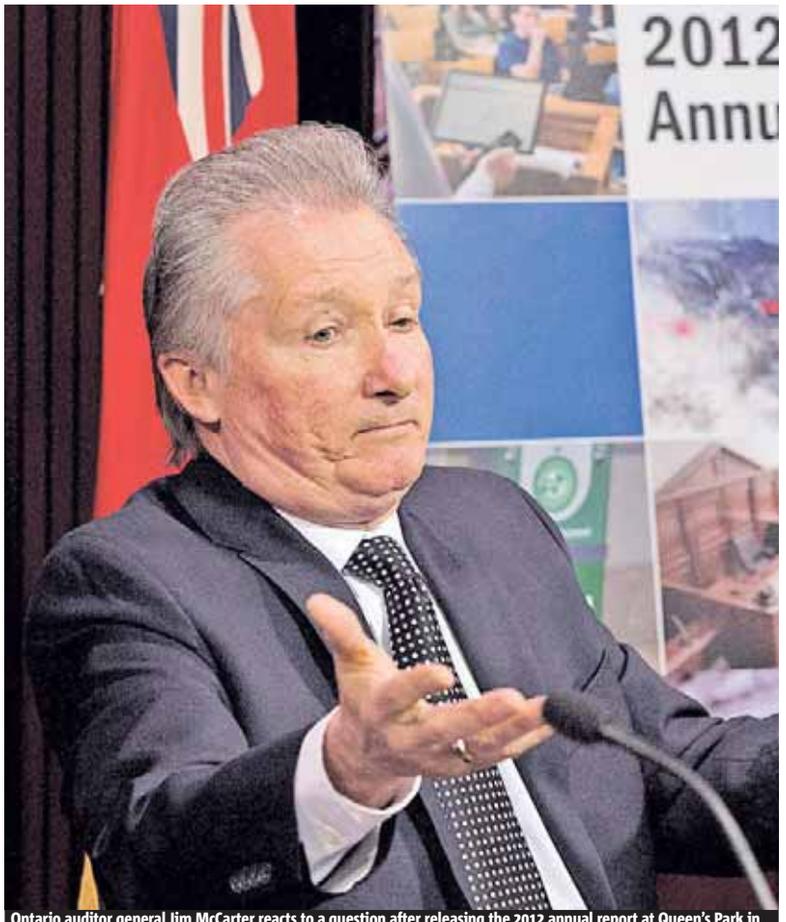

Ontario auditor general Jim McCarter reacts to a question after releasing the 2012 annual report at Queen's Park in Toronto on Wednesday. NATHAN DENETTE/THE CANADIAN PRESS

$1.4B write-off in unpaid taxes can't be afforded: Auditor

Provincial finances. Tax collectors don't jump on those owing quickly enough, Jim McCarter says

At a time when Ontario is crying poor, Queen's Park is writing off $1.4 billion in unpaid taxes, Auditor-General Jim McCarter warned in his report Wednesday.

That represents one-tenth of the provincial deficit of $14.4 billion.

"That's an awful lot of money, especially in this economic climate," he told reporters after introducing his 10th and last annual report, which in part blames tax collectors for not being diligent enough.

"If you talk to skip tracers, the most important thing is you've got (to) get onto somebody very quickly ... we found on the average case when an account went into collection it took seven months before they even picked up the phone."

McCarter's reports pointed to a number of ways the government isn't getting value for hard-earned tax dollars.

Auditor's reports are typically a field day for opposition parties, but the impact will be blunted this year with the legislature and the daily question period suspended following McGuinty's surprise resignation in October.

Just the same, opposition parties got in their licks.

"Nine years of reckless overspending by the current government, coupled with chronic mismanagement of taxpayers' money, have left us in a very deep hole," said Progressive Conservative MPP Jim Wilson (Simcoe-Grey).

Wilson called the Drive Clean program for vehicle emissions a cash grab that should be scrapped immediately.

NDP Leader Andrea Horwath said the $1.4 billion in likely tax write-offs "could pay for thousands of hours of home care or more than 15,000 nurses."

The report did not touch on the controversial cost of at least $230 million for the government to scrap power plants in Liberal ridings in Mississauga and Oakville before last fall's election reduced Premier Dalton McGuinty to a minority government — McCarter promised a special report on the closures before his tenure ends April 30. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Rising costs

- The veteran accountant drew a bead on Ontario Provincial Police, Crown attorneys and the youth justice system, saying their costs are rising at alarming levels despite declining crime rates.
- He also questioned the need to continue taking cash out of motorists' pockets to the tune of $30 million a year for Drive Clean emission tests when cleaner-burning new vehicles have basically rendered the 13-year-old program obsolete.

Weston to meet YoPro team after video goes viral

An impassioned YouTube plea by the co-founder of YoPro Treats Inc. to Loblaw Cos. Ltd. executive chair Galen Weston has been met with a sympathetic response from the executive chairman of the supermarket chain.

Weston has offered to meet personally with Amanda House, 35, and her partner, Chris Delaney, 41, to hear the details of their claim against Loblaw and try to resolve their situation "right away."

The offer came after House's compelling YouTube video caught the attention of several media outlets and Loblaw customers on Wednesday. Posted on Tuesday, it had been viewed 15,000 times by 5 p.m. the next day.

Amanda House and Chris Delaney TARA WALTON/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

After reviewing the YouTube post, Weston said he decided to act.

"The events she describes are deeply disturbing and do not in any way meet the high ethical standards aspired to by Loblaw Companies and outlined in its code of conduct," Weston said in an email response Wednesday.

In the video, House says their five-year battle with Loblaw has taken a toll on their finances, their families and Delaney's health.

The video comes more than two years after YoPro launched a lawsuit in Ontario Superior Court alleging errors and mistakes on Loblaw's part cost it sales and ultimately their business. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Forget the gym, beer drinkers flock to LCBO for the six-pack they've always wanted

Beer fans thronged the Queen's Quay LCBO to purchase a six-pack with two glasses of the Belgium beer Westvleteren. Brewed by monks in Belgium and usually available only at the monastery gates, the monks decided to do a limited edition run to raise money to restore the monastery. Each six-pack costs $76.85 and the store manager says they were sold out in four minutes. STEVE RUSSELL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Police cars rammed

New murder charge laid against hit-and-run suspect

Toronto police have laid another attempted murder charge against a man wanted in a multiple hit-and-run incident.

Police say the new charge stems from an encounter with a suspect early Wednesday, when they allege a male driver rammed a car into two police cruisers.

They say it happened as officers tried to arrest the suspect in connection with a number of charges stemming from a hit-and-run collision Friday.

Steven Brunswick, 47, is accused of driving a stolen vehicle hitting three people. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Toronto Animal Services

Adoption drive: 12 Strays of Christmas

It's not quite Dasher and Dancer and Prancer and Vixen. In the 12 Strays of Christmas, Toronto Animal Services wants you to take home Draeko and Ginger and Snowballs and Mittens.

Launched on Wednesday and leading up to Dec. 23, the adoption drive includes four shelters with animals in need.

Stray dogs THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dogs and cats come neutered or spayed, de-wormed and vet-checked. There are also bunnies, hamsters, guinea pigs and birds. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Party on

Infamous Queen's homecoming is back

Queen's University principal Daniel Woolf announced Wednesday that the annual tradition would make its return next October — the first homecoming the city of Kingston has seen since the event was cancelled in 2008.

"The decision came about because homecoming is a very important tradition for alumni and for students," Woolf said.

The event was first suspended in November 2008 in the aftermath of a raucous weekend in September, where a massive street party led to 140 arrests, 700 liquor charges and more than 20 severely intoxicated people being sent to the emergency room. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Hearing. 'Dr. Robin Hood' found guilty of bilking OHIP to feed poor

A Toronto doctor who embellished statements about food allergies on special diet-allowance forms for patients on welfare — and billed the government $1.8 million over four years — has been found guilty of professional misconduct.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario said Dr. Roland Wong failed to take steps to determine that patients for whom he approved the dietary allowance actually had the allergies listed on the special form. He also didn't maintain proper patient records, nor assess patients enough to bill the province.

Dr. Roland Wong
TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

An audit completed on 15 patient records, which formed the basis for the disciplinary hearing, determined that Wong approved eligibility for the $250 monthly maximum allowance based on the patients having wheat, soy, milk and egg allergies and chronic constipation.

While the disciplinary committee understood Wong's desire to help maximize financial benefit for a patient — he was dubbed a modern-day Robin Hood and got support from at least one medical expert during the hearings — it said his methods weren't justifiable.

Wong's lawyer, Peter Rosenthal, said neither he nor his client would comment before a penalty is determined.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Billings

- From 2007 to 2009, Dr. Roland Wong earned between $418,925 and $718,026 a year, for a total of $1.8 million — this just on billing for applications completed ($20 each) and for partial patient assessments ($30.60 each).
- In 2008, he billed for $718,000 — $540,000 more than the average family doctor billed overall that year.

Kennedy pushes peace plan to end teachers' protests

Olive branch. Leadership contender says province should hold off on imposing contracts using Bill 115

Gerard Kennedy, who is vying to succeed Premier Dalton McGuinty as Ontario Liberal leader, is pushing a conciliatory approach to ending the teachers' disputes roiling the province.

Kennedy, McGuinty's education minister from 2003 until 2006, when he left for a federal Liberal leadership bid, pledged to return stability and civility to relations between the province and education unions if he becomes premier next month.

"This is not a token gesture," he said on Wednesday.

Urging the government and the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario to step back from the precipice for the good of students, he said no contracts should be imposed using the controversial Bill 115, which freezes wages and curbs benefits, before a new Liberal leader is chosen from Jan. 25 to 27 in Toronto.

In exchange for that olive branch, the unions would agree to stop further job action, and boards of education would pledge not to lock out workers before the end of February.

Kennedy, 52, would then convene blue-ribbon "consultation tables" to "roll back a bit on the misunderstanding" between the sides.

OSSTF president Ken Coran said his members "are always prepared to bargain when we can bargain freely and we are open to any kind of discussions that would be requested, or warranted, to try and resolve this seemingly impasse situation."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

About-face

- Gerard Kennedy's proposal is at odds with the strategy of Premier Dalton McGuinty and Education Minister Laurel Broten, which has provoked the ETFO and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation.

Gerard Kennedy says no contracts should be imposed using Bill 115, which freezes wages and curbs benefits, before a new Liberal leader is chosen in January. DAVE CHIDLEY/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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UN war crimes tribunal convicts Bosnian Serb officer of genocide

Srebrenica massacre. 'Right hand' of Ratko Mladic found guilty of having lead role in 1995 murder of some 8,000 Muslim men and boys

A UN war crimes court convicted a former senior Bosnian Serb army commander Wednesday of genocide for playing a key role in Europe's worst massacre since the Second World War, and sentenced him to life imprisonment, delivering another measure of justice to survivors still hunting for the remains of their husbands and sons.

In a majority ruling, a three-judge panel at the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal said Gen. Zdravko Tolimir was the "right hand" of Bosnian Serb military chief Gen. Ratko Mladic, who is considered the chief architect of the murder of some 8,000 Muslim men and boys at the Srebrenica enclave in eastern Bosnia in July 1995.

"The accused not only had knowledge of genocidal intent of others but also possessed it himself," Presiding Judge Christoph Fluegge said. "He is therefore responsible for the crime of genocide."

Women who lost their menfolk in the massacre travelled to The Hague to watch the judgment and were pleased with the latest conviction.

Quote

"This is what we expected, and we feel better now. We hope the court will continue to conduct fair trials."

Srebrenica widow Rejha Avdic, 50, who lost her husband in the massacre.

In this photo taken Tuesday, survivors of the 1995 Srebrenica massacre hold photographs of male relatives who were killed, during a gathering in the northern Bosnian town of Tuzla, 149 kilometres north of Sarajevo. AMEL EMRIC/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

"Finally, we witnessed a small bit of justice," said Munira Subasic, leader of a group called the Mothers of Srebrenica. "We are still alive to witness it and we are still searching for the bones of our sons."

Tolimir stood, crossed himself three times and removed his glasses but showed no emotion as Fluegge told him he had been convicted of genocide and would spend the rest of his life in prison.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

1995

Bosnian Serb forces overran Srebrenica in 1995.

- **UN.** The presence of Dutch United Nations peacekeepers who were outgunned, outnumbered and who put up virtually no resistance did not deter the Bosnian Serbs. They later took over another UN-protected enclave in the nearby town of Zepa.
- **Massacre.** Women were bused away from the area before the Muslim men and boys were rounded up, taken to remote locations around the town and executed. Their bodies were then plowed into mass graves.

Egyptian Coptic blogger gets 3 years for blasphemy

A Cairo court on Wednesday convicted a Coptic Christian blogger who shared an anti-Islam film on social networking sites, and sentenced him to three years in prison for blasphemy and contempt of religion.

The case of Alber Saber is one of several seen by rights advocates as a campaign led by Egypt's ultra-conservative Islamists to curb free expression. Many of those targeted in the campaign are Christians, who make up about 10 per cent of Egypt's population of 85 million.

Saber was arrested Sept. 13 after neighbours complained he had shared on Facebook the amateur film made in the U.S. that sparked protests across the Muslim world. His arrest came during a wave of public outrage over the film, produced by an Egyptian-American Copt.

At the time, an angry mob surrounded Saber's house, calling for his death and accusing him of heresy, atheism and of promoting the Innocence of Muslims — the short film that portrays the Prophet Mohammed as a fraud, womanizer and buffoon.

Saber's verdict comes as Egypt has been plunged into a political crisis over a draft constitution. Islamist supporters say the charter is a step toward stability while critics warn it will open the door to increased suppression of freedom in the name of religion.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quote

"This is an outrageous verdict and sentence for a person whose only 'crime' was to post his opinions online."

Amnesty International's Hassiba Hadj Sahraoui, condemning the verdict and demanding Saber be freed immediately and that all charges against him be dropped.

Other convictions

- Last month, another Egyptian court convicted in absentia seven other Coptic Christians and a Florida-based pastor, sentencing them to death on charges linked to the Innocence of Muslims video.

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Jury sees gory scenes in trial of Que. filmmaker

Accusations. Remy Couture has been accused of corrupting morals through his work

Special-effects filmmaker Remy Couture.
GRAHAM HUGHES/THE CANADIAN PRESS

The jury hearing the trial of a Quebec special-effects artist charged with corrupting morals has had a chance to see his handiwork.

The seven-woman, five-man jury watched in silence as hundreds of photos and a pair of videos that depict gruesome murders, torture, assaults and necrophilia with female victims were put on display.

Remy Couture is charged with corrupting morals through the distribution, possession and production of obscene materials in a case that explores the boundaries of artistic expression.

The jury is tasked with deciding if the material in question is obscene and dangerous and could actually incite people to act out what they see, as the Crown contends.

Couture argues his work has artistic value and the state's interference amounts to an infringement of his right to free expression.

The jury has asked that the court speed up the process of viewing the photos. The judge has approved the request. The photos were originally being shown for about 10 seconds each, but were later switched roughly every five.

The images appeared on a website Couture hosted, dubbed "Inner Depravity." The violent, sexually explicit, horror-inspired works were based on a serial-killer character Couture created and played.

His trial got underway Monday with jury selection and two weeks have been set aside to hear evidence.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pope Benedict XVI begins tweeting

In this photo provided by the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano, Pope Benedict XVI pushes a button on a tablet at the Vatican on Wednesday. In perhaps the most drawn-out Twitter launch ever, the Pope's first tweet reads, "Dear friends, I am pleased to get in touch with you through Twitter. Thank you for your generous response. I bless all of you from my heart." Later in the day he was to respond to a few messages sent to him from around the world. The Pope has garnered more than one million followers in the eight languages of his account. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Basketball team beats opponent 107-2

An Indiana high school girls basketball team routed an opponent 107-2 this week, prompting an official with the state prep sports association to say he never wants to see anything so one-sided again.

Bloomington South coach Larry Winters told the Indianapolis Star there was no effort to embarrass Arlington or run up the score during Tuesday's game. He says he played all nine of his players and didn't stop shooting because "that would have been more embarrassing" to Arlington, whose only points came on a free throw in the second quarter and another in the third.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Tories 'hit the reset button': F-35 mess to be reviewed

Bombshell findings shock MPs. Costs could soar to $45.8 billion over 42 years, long-awaited KPMG report warns

The Harper government has "hit the reset button" in the F-35 mess.

A bombshell report has exposed the cascading multibillion-dollar cost of the stealth aircraft.

The long-awaited KPMG report warns the Lockheed Martin-built F-35s could cost Canada as much as $45.8 billion over 42 years.

The report says National Defence neglected to build a large enough financial cushion into the plan to replace Canada's aging fighter fleet.

And the paltry-by-comparison $9 billion the department set aside likely won't be enough to cover the planned purchase of 65 jets.

That F-35 headache just won't go away. Defence Minister Peter MacKay takes part in a Parliament Hill news conference on the controversial fighter jets on Wednesday. FRED CHARTRAND/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Now the entire process will be reviewed, Public Works Minister Rona Ambrose said Wednesday.

"The next step is a full review of options," Ambrose told a news conference following the release of the report.

"We have hit the reset button and are taking the time to do a complete assessment of all available options."

Defence Minister Peter MacKay said the government will ensure "that balance is maintained between the military needs and taxpayer interests.

"Ultimately, our government will get the best plane for the armed forces, for our pilots and for Canadian taxpayers."

The NDP's Opposition critics were unmoved, however, insisting the government was steadfastly refusing to admit the whole process has been fumbled.

"You can't move on, you can't move forward, until you've admitted that you've got a problem and that you've made mistakes," said Matthew Kellway, the party's procurement critic.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Numbers game

65

The number of jets in the government's planned F-35 purchase. But the soaring costs may force a reduction to 55 planes.

Wire cash, please

Skype scam almost pays off

Police are warning people to be on guard against fraudsters using Skype.

Kingston police say a resident got a Skype video call from a man identifying himself as a doctor held prisoner in Syria.

The supposed doctor said if $2,500 was not transferred to a Western Union office in Lebanon, he would be beheaded. The victim wired funds — but later contacted police and stopped the transfer.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Nuclear impasse

Iran pressured on two fronts

A UN inspection team Wednesday pressured Iran to allow it to visit Parchin, a site it suspects may have been used for nuclear weapons experiments.

And European Union negotiators pushed for a new meeting with the Iranians in a bid to achieve a diplomatic solution to the nuclear impasse.

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North Korea flies high, UN brings it down to Earth

Pyongyang jubilant over rocket. Security Council warns of reprisals — but it all depends on China

Rocket-happy North Korea got an angry rocket on Wednesday … from the United Nations Security Council.

It condemned the North Koreans' successful rocket launch and said it will urgently consider "an appropriate response.''

But whether that response includes new sanctions against the North — which the United States and its European allies are seeking — depends first and foremost on China, the North's closest ally.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei said in Beijing the council's response should be "prudent and moderate and conducive to maintaining stability and avoiding escalation of the situation."

The Security Council said the launch violates Security Council resolutions adopted after North Korea's nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009.

Secretive North Korea also broke a ban on "any launch using ballistic missile technology," it complained.

The successful rocket launch is widely seen as a test that takes North Korea one step closer to being capable of sending a nuclear-tipped warhead as far as California.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

The launch "constitutes a very dangerous challenge to … the security situation in the Korean peninsula and northeast Asia."

Kim Sook,
South Korea's UN ambassador

The flames of anger burn in South Korea over the North's rocket launch. In Seoul, protesters burn a mock rocket only to see police move in with fire extinguishers. South Koreans fear for the security of their country. AHN YOUNG-JOON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Canada pledges $15M amid Syrian refugee flood

Syrian rebels clean their weapons Wednesday at their headquarters near Idlib, Syria. MUHAMMED MUHEISEN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Canada will contribute another $15 million in humanitarian aid to help Syria's neighbours cope with the overflow of hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing the country's civil war.

But Canada will wait before following some of its major allies in formally conferring recognition on the Syrian opposition.

Foreign Affairs Minister John Baird announced the extra funds at a large international meeting in Morocco with the Syrian opposition.

Canada will give Jordan an additional $5 million on top of the $6.5 million Baird announced on a trip to the country earlier this year.

Canada also contributed another $10 million to the international agencies working on the Syrian refugee crisis, bringing its total contribution to $22 million.

Baird also said the government would give Jordan $1.5 million worth of protective personal equipment to guard against a chemical weapons attack in Syria.

Baird echoed the growing global concern that Syrian President Bashar Assad might resort to using chemical weapons against his own people as the 21-month popular uprising against his regime continues.

"We remain deeply concerned about the potential loss of control over chemical weapons stockpiles, missiles, and other conventional weapons, which could pose a wider global and regional threat,'' Baird said.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada stands firm

As expected, Canada did not join the U.S., Europe and other allies in recognizing the new Syrian opposition as the sole body to succeed the Assad regime.

- **Our demands.** Canada wants Kurds, Christians and Sunni and Shiite Muslims to have a place in Syria's future — and it wants radical Jihadists weeded out.

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Dad who killed his kids to be freed

A father who stabbed his children to death will be a free man, less than four years later.

Guy Turcotte has been granted his release, with conditions, from a psychiatric institution. The cardiologist had been found not criminally responsible for killing his two children and, since last year's court verdict, he had been in Montreal's Pinel institute.

His case provoked a torrent of outrage in Quebec, where Turcotte is a household name.

He had admitted to stabbing his young children 46 times but said he didn't remember doing it, hadn't wanted to do it and had been experiencing blackouts on the night of the killings.

He said he was distraught over the breakup of his marriage. His wife had left him for a family friend who was her personal trainer.

Turcotte's release was unanimously approved today by a three-member panel. He will have to get annual mental-health checkups, continue his therapy, stay out of trouble and avoid all contact with his ex-wife. But his legal woes are not over yet: the Crown has filed to appeal the 2011 court verdict.

The Tories plan to introduce a bill in the House of Commons early next year that would make the safety of the public the paramount factor for review boards that determine an offender's release.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Criminal Code plans

Several cases like Turcotte's, including the 2008 bus-beheading in Manitoba and the Schoenborn child-killings in B.C., have prompted a federal policy change. The Harper government plans to make it more difficult for mentally ill offenders found not criminally responsible to be released from custody.

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Singer Justin Bieber at a Dec. 5 event in Philadelphia. A plot to murder the singer in November was foiled by police. LISA LAKE/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Alleged plot to murder Justin Bieber thwarted

Warning.
This story contains graphic details

A police affidavit alleges that two prison inmates and one of their nephews were hatching a plot to murder Bieber and his director of security while the singer was in New York for shows on Nov. 28 and 29.

Details of the grisly plan — which involved strangling two other victims with a paisley tie and then castrating them — were revealed Wednesday in an affidavit for arrest obtained by New Mexico State Police.

But the plot may have been thwarted by a missed highway exit and a pair of recorded phone calls between an inmate and one of the accused.

According to the affidavit, the plan was hatched behind bars after inmate Dana Martin was transferred from a Florida prison to the Southern New Mexico Corrections Facility in April.

Martin, 45, serving a life sentence for the rape and murder of a 15-year-old girl in Vermont, was reportedly obsessed with Bieber. He had written him letters and even had a tattoo of the singer on his leg.

He allegedly recruited Mark Aaron Staake, 41, a fellow inmate at the time, after Staake noticed the tattoo on his leg. The plan was to kill four people in two states, with Bieber as the main target.

Oddly, the details were spilled on Nov. 20, when Martin asked to speak to police, telling them Staake, who had been released on probation on Oct. 22, and his nephew, Tanner Ruane, 23, had been planning to commit the first two murders — neither of them Bieber. New Mexico police declined to identify those intended victims.

Martin is serving consecutive life sentences for murders committed in 2000. The strangulation murder of the 15-year-old girl was a "case of jealousy," police told The Associated Press.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Suspected mastermind

- **Manipulator?** The police affidavit describes Martin as "a very good manipulator," who convinced Staake that he had access to large sums of money and a multimillion-dollar home and property, where Staake and Ruane could hide out.
- **Connections.** He also told Staake that he had connections to Chinese gangs in New York, who had "sanctioned" the murders, according to the affidavit.

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Allegations against Savile 'unprecedented'

In this 1986 photo, Jimmy Savile, right, poses with a wax model at Madame Tussauds museum in London. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

199 crimes suspected.
Police publish update on sexual-abuse claims against BBC presenter

The late BBC entertainer Jimmy Savile is a suspect in 199 crimes recorded so far, including dozens of cases of rape, British police said Wednesday. They described the level of sexual-abuse allegations against Savile as "unprecedented in the U.K."

The accusations against Savile, who died last year at age 84, grew after five women said during a TV program broadcast in October that they'd been sexually abused by the presenter. The claims triggered a scandal that rocked the BBC, which has been accused of failing to report allegations against Savile while making shows praising him.

Police said they expect a report on Savile's activities based on the alleged victims' evidence, to be published early next year. On Wednesday, police published an update.

Most of those people who came forward were women who alleged sexual abuse when they were young, police said.

A broader investigation spurred by the claims has so far detained seven suspects for questioning. They included former pop star Gary Glitter and publicist Max Clifford. No criminal charges have been filed.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The allegations

- 199 crimes have been recorded in 17 police jurisdictions.
- 31 rape allegations have been recorded.
- 450 people have come forward with information, mainly alleging sexual abuse.

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Argentina. Sex-slavery acquittals spur protest

The acquittal of 13 people accused of kidnapping a young mother and forcing her to work for years as a sex slave spread shock and outrage across Argentina on Wednesday, prompting street protests and calls by political leaders to impeach the three judges who delivered the verdict.

Many called the ruling a setback for Argentina's efforts to combat sex trafficking, which began largely as a result of Susana Trimarco's one-woman, decade-long quest to find her missing daughter, Maria de los Angeles "Marita" Veron. Her lawyers said the verdict shows that impunity still reigns, and said they would pursue appeals.

Trimarco's search exposed an underworld of organized-crime figures who operate brothels with protection from authorities across Argentina.

Security Minister Nilda Garre called the verdict "a tremendous slap in the face for the prospect of justice."

"It's not only a reversal for this particular case ... that made society feel deeply the drama of this kind of 21st-century slavery, covered up for decades by the customs of a network of machista culture," she said.

It also "renders invisible the suffering of the victims of human-trafficking networks and sexual exploitation, who gave such courageous testimony during the trial," Garre said.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A demonstrator, wearing a T-shirt that reads "We are not your prostitutes," takes part in a protest against the acquittal of 13 people accused in the disappearance of Marita Veron in Buenos Aires on Wednesday. VICTOR R. CAIVANO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

B.C. borders

Three arrested on child-porn charges

Canadian border officials stopped three men with what was believed to be child pornography in separate incidents at air, sea and land B.C. border crossings. The first arrest was made Dec. 2, when guards discovered a laptop with illegal images, on a marine vessel. Dec. 5, a man was stopped at the airport and his laptop, phones and flash drives were seized. Later that day, a third man was arrested on a bus with suspected child-exploitation images on his laptop. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Big bust

Woman arrested for cocaine-filled breast implants

Spanish authorities say they have arrested a Panamanian woman arriving at Barcelona airport with 1.38 kilograms of cocaine concealed in breast implants.

The Interior Ministry said that border police noticed fresh scars and blood-stained gauze on her chest as well as pale patches beneath her skin. The woman said she had recently had breast-implant surgery.

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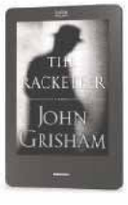

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PSY performs onstage during the Y100's Jingle Ball 2012 at the BB&T Center on Saturday in Miami.

MICHAEL KOVAC/GETTY IMAGES

'Gangnam Style' a top trending item for Google in 2012

Zeitgeist. Whitney Houston, Superstorm Sandy, iPad 3 and Kate Middleton round out year-end list of high-traffic searches

The world's attention wavered between the tragic and the silly in 2012, and along the way, millions of people searched the web to find out about a royal princess, the latest iPad, and a record-breaking skydiver.

Whitney Houston was the "top trending" search of the year, according to Google Inc.'s year-end "zeitgeist" report. Google's 12th annual roundup is "an in-depth look at the spirit of the times as seen through the billions of searches on Google over the past year," the company said in a blog post Wednesday.

People around the globe searched en masse for news about Houston's accidental drowning in a bathtub just before she was to perform at a pre-Grammy Awards party in February.

Google defines topics as "trending" when they garner a high amount of traffic over a sustained period of time.

Korean rapper PSY's "Gangnam Style" music video trotted into second spot, a testament to his self-deprecating giddy-up dance move. The video is approaching a billion views on YouTube.

Superstorm Sandy, the damaging storm that knocked out power and flooded parts of the East Coast in the midst of a U.S. presidential campaign, was third.

The next biggest trending searches globally were a pair of threes: the iPad 3 tablet from Apple Inc. and Diablo 3, a popular video game.

Rounding out the Top 10 were Kate Middleton, who made news with scandalous photos and a royal pregnancy; the 2012 Olympics in London; Amanda Todd, a Canadian teen who was found dead of an apparent suicide in October after being bullied online and Michael Clarke Duncan, the "Green Mile" actor who died of a heart attack in September at age 54; and "BBB12," the 12th edition of "Big Brother Brasil."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

What do you meme?

Facebook and Yahoo's top trending ideas or phrases (popularly known as "memes") include:

- **YOLO.** It means "You Only Live Once"—used both sincerely and ironically.
- **Binders full of women.** Mitt Romney's awkward description of his search for women cabinet members.

Dead people 'liking' Facebook sites

A veteran Web developer has documented cases of dead people mysteriously "liking" a Facebook site.

Bernard Meisler, who is also an author and educator, tracked down a vegetarian who "liked" McDonald's and a Facebook user without a car who "liked" Subaru.

Facebook recycles "likes" of people alive and dead so yours can pop up at any time unless you act to block them, a Facebook spokeswoman told Torstar News Service.

Meisler had become suspicious when non-English speakers started "liking" the Facebook page for his English-language arts magazine Sensitive Skin.

"This was suboptimal—not to mention extremely weird—for a literary magazine written in English," Meisler wrote Wednesday in an article on the tech website ReadWrite.com.

Two friends were outraged to find posthumous Facebook "likes" for people they knew. In one, a man who hated big corporations had "liked" Discover six months after he died. TORSTAR NEWS SERVCE

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Monks form human chain to demand apology

Myanmar crackdown. Protest sparked by use of tear gas, smoke bombs to break up occupation of mine

Buddhist monks march Wednesday during a protest in Yangon, Myanmar against a violent crackdown on monks by Myanmar police at Letpadaung copper mine, which is located in Monywa. KHIN MAUNG WIN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Buddhist monks across Myanmar peacefully demonstrated Wednesday to demand a formal apology from the government for its recent crackdown on protesters at a copper mine that injured more than 100 of their monastic colleagues.

Hundreds of monks in Yangon and Mandalay, the country's two biggest cities, along with Monywa, the town closest to the mine in northwestern Myanmar, and at least six other towns marched in protest Wednesday as security forces stood by without interfering.

The monks said they are not satisfied with the apologies made by the government so far. Police used water cannons, tear gas and smoke bombs on Nov. 29 to break up an 11-day occupation of the Letpadaung mine project, a joint venture between a military-controlled holding company and a Chinese mining company. Protesters want the project halted, saying it is causing environmental, social and health problems.

Nearly 400 monks accompanied by hundreds of lay people marched in a human chain from the east gate of Yangon's famous Shwedagon pagoda to downtown City Hall. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

McAfee heads to Miami — flies coach

Software company founder John McAfee leaves a detention centre in Guatemala City and heads to the Aurora International Airport on Wednesday. He was put on a commercial flight bound for Miami, where he sat in a coach-class seat. McAfee was detained last week for immigration violations after he sneaked into Guatemala from neighbouring Belize, where authorities sought to question him about the murder of his neighbour. MOISES CASTILLO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

After the trial

Activist's nephew faces Kafkaesque legal woes in China

A lawyer for the imprisoned nephew of Chinese activist Chen Guangcheng said his legal team would likely miss Thursday's deadline to file an appeal against his conviction because authorities have denied their repeated requests to meet with him.

Blind legal activist Chen Guangcheng made a daring escape from house arrest and fled to the U.S. Embassy in Beijing in April, setting off a diplomatic tussle between China and the United States. He is now living in New York.

His nephew, Chen Kegui, was convicted two weeks ago of attacking officials who stormed his house looking for his uncle and was sentenced to three years in prison.

Lawyer Ding Xikui said Wednesday that requests to meet with Chen have been turned down repeatedly by the Yinan Detention Center in eastern Shandong province, where he is being held.

"Chen Kegui's family insists on appealing, but we must get the approval from Chen himself," Ding said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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New Mexico. Virgin Galactic's future at spaceport up in the air

The deal was sold to New Mexicans in classic Richard Branson fashion. If taxpayers would build the colourful British businessman a $209-million US futuristic spaceport, he would make New Mexico the launching point for a space-tourism business catering to the rich and famous.

Now, with Spaceport America nearly complete but still mostly empty, a Virgin Galactic official says the company will reassess its agreement if lawmakers don't pass liability-exemption laws for its suppliers, raising the possibility it could take its spacecraft elsewhere.

State officials acknowledge the company — which has yet to post a deposit for what is supposed to be a $1-million-a-year lease — could walk away from the quarter-billion-dollar project. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A celestial courtship

- Texas and Florida are developing their own spaceports and aggressively courting space businesses.
- Virgin Galactic has entered a deal with an investment group to build another spaceport in Abu Dhabi.

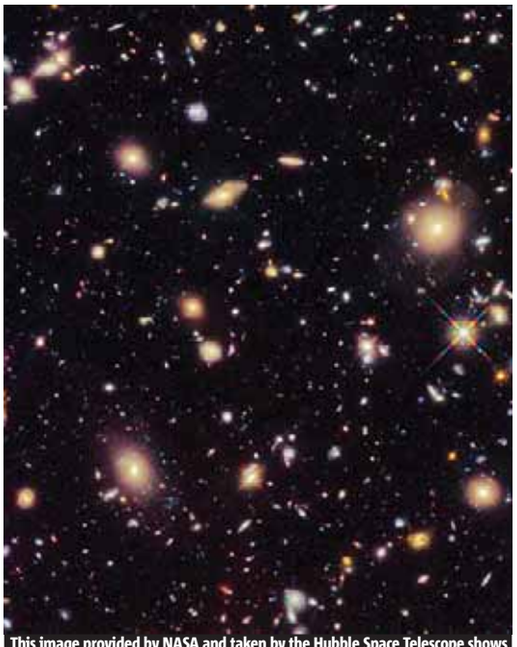
France

Notre Dame cathedral readies to ring in 2013

Dignitaries, tourists and Parisians gathered in the thousands Wednesday for a ceremony and Mass marking the beginning of the yearlong commemoration of Notre Dame Cathedral's 850th anniversary.

The 12th-century Gothic cathedral looming over the French capital will get a set of new bells in February, one of the highlights of a year's worth of planned events including seminars, concerts of sacred music. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Distant galaxy retakes its title of oldest in universe



This image provided by NASA and taken by the Hubble Space Telescope shows previously unseen early galaxies, including the oldest one at 13.3 billion years old. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hubble's big find. New photos reveal distant cluster of blue stars believed to be 13.3 billion years old

A galaxy once considered the oldest has reclaimed its title, scientists reported Wednesday.

Poring through Hubble Space Telescope photos, the team recalculated the galaxy's age and determined it is actually 13.3 billion years old — not a mere 13.2 billion.

The dim galaxy filled with blue stars was first noticed last year by a different group of researchers, who also used the workhorse telescope to make the previous age estimate. It reigned as the most ancient galaxy observed until last month when it was knocked off its perch by another distant galaxy.

Now it's back on top after the team used a longer exposure time to get a clearer view.

Besides refining the galaxy's age, they found half a dozen new early ones. Scientists are excited about the bounty of early galaxies, which should help refine theories about the formation of the first stars.

Astronomers think galaxies started appearing after the Big Bang, the explosion believed to have created the universe 13.7 billion years ago. Our Milky Way — one of hundreds of billions of galaxies — formed about 10 billion years ago.

Launched in 1990, Hubble has consistently peered back in time to reveal ancient and distant objects.

As far back as Hubble can see, it still can't capture the earliest galaxies. That job is left to its more powerful successor, the James Webb Telescope, to be launched in 2018. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

"We want to know our cosmic roots, how things got started and the origins of the galaxies."
Harvard University astrophysicist Avi Loeb reacts to new telescope images of space

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The photo in the centre shows Jacob Tyler Roberts, the man behind a shooting at an Oregon Mall on Tuesday. Roberts killed two people and himself in the rampage. The photos on the left and right are victims Cindy Ann Yuille, 54, of Portland, Ore., and Steven Mathew Forsyth, 45, of West Linn, Ore. Another victim, Kristina Shevchenko, not shown, was wounded and is in serious condition. CLACKAMAS COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mall shooter, 22, used stolen rifle: Officials

Oregon slayings.
Police say the weapon jammed, preventing more deaths

The hockey mask-wearing gunman who killed two people and himself in a shooting rampage at a U.S. mall deep into the Christmas shopping season was 22 and used a stolen rifle from someone he knew, authorities said Wednesday.

Authorities said the death toll could have been worse: The rifle jammed and mall employees had been trained for the possibility of a mass shooting.

Jacob Tyler Roberts had armed himself with an AR-15 semiautomatic rifle and had several fully loaded magazines when he walked briskly into an Oregon mall on Tuesday afternoon and started firing at random, said Clackamas County Sheriff Craig Roberts.

The gunman then fled into a back hallway, down stairs and into a corner, where police found him dead from an apparently self-inflicted gunshot, authorities said.

The sheriff said authorities didn't yet have a motive.

Employees at the mall had been trained to run, hide, lock down and evacuate. Since previous mass shootings in the U.S., the first arriving police officers were trained to form teams and go inside instead of waiting for speciality teams.

A law enforcement official told The Associated Press the shooter did not have a criminal record. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss details of an ongoing criminal investigation.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Gruesome scene

"I saw a gentleman face down, obviously shot in the head.... A lot of blood. You could tell there was nothing you could do for him."

Witness Jason DeCosta

Timeline

The shooting began when a masked man announced, "I am the shooter," said witness Austin Patty, 20.

- The mall Santa, Brance Wilson, said he heard gunshots and dove for the floor as Christmas music played.
- Witnesses said Roberts fired several times near the mall food court before running into Macy's.
- The first emergency call came at 3:29 p.m. Officers arrived a minute later. By 3:51 p.m., the victims and gunman had been found.

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Child advocate: Rehab mom was treated unfairly

Saskatchewan. Social Services taken to task over child-welfare case

Saskatchewan's children's advocate says two kids and their rehabilitated mother were not treated fairly by the child-welfare system.

Bob Pringle said it was correct for Social Services to take the boy and girl from their mother, who was a drug addict and prostitute.

Pringle also said ministry staff initially took the right steps to reunite the family by working with the mother to help her get better.

But he said those efforts stopped when the ministry sought permanent wardship of the kids in 2008 — even though policy says it should have continued.

That was unfair to both the mother and her children and something that needs to be acknowledge by the system, he said.

Pringle launched a rare administrative fairness investigation into the case in January after a court decision garnered media attention.

Last fall, Court of Queen's Bench Justice Geoffrey Dufour scolded the province's child-welfare system for ignoring court orders to arrange regular visits between the children and their mother. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Pringle's report

- In April 2009, the mother told the ministry that she was addressing her health needs and completed two addiction-treatment programs.
- Social Services could have withdrawn the application for the permanent wardship, and deciding not to do so was unfair to the children, Pringle wrote.

A big royal presence under the Christmas tree

Princess Charlene and Prince Albert II of Monaco attend the Christmas Celebration for children on Wednesday in Monaco. The princess and prince handed out hundreds of gifts to the eager children. PASCAL LE SEGRETAIN/GETTY IMAGES

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Mortgage Renewals and How They Work

When your renewal date is near and the term of your mortgage is ending, it's important to know your options in order to secure a new mortgage that best suits your needs. A renewal notice is sent to you four months prior to the renewal date. Many people simply fill out the form, sign it and return it back to their lender without exploring other options. At renewal time, the key is to shop around for lower mortgage rates, especially with today's low interest rates.

Mortgage Renewal: When receiving your renewal notices, you are not required to immediately sign and return the form. It's a good time to reassess your personal financial situation to make sure you find the best possible mortgage option suited to you. You should take the four months to investigate your options.

Tips to help navigate through the mortgage renewal process.

- Research and compare mortgage products and rates that are currently available in the market
- Ask plenty of questions and consider your options carefully
- Reassess your financial situation
- Determine your mortgage goals – when do you plan to be mortgage-free? How much can you afford? This will help you determine your amortization period and payment schedule (monthly vs. bi-weekly payments)
- Understand the level of risk you are willing to take so that you can identify whether you should select a variable or a fixed rate mortgage
- Shop around for Canadian mortgage rates to find a better mortgage rate, using comparison websites like ComparaSave.com.

To help assess your financial situation, ask yourself these questions:

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Hair Grow Technology's Bio-Fen® product line is continually moving forward! We are introducing our two latest versions; **Bio-Fen® Plus for Men** and **Bio-Fen® Plus for Women**. These products have been assigned Natural Product Numbers (NPN's) by Health Canada.

We recognize that both men and women experience androgenic alopecia (AGA, or male / female pattern baldness) and have made some improvements to the original formulation based on the latest science to address their specific needs. You will notice that we now have additional complementary (Health Canada Approved) health claims on each product.

How does Bio-Fen® PLUS work?

We are bringing you two new products with **double** the number of capsules and **triple** the number of health claims for men and **four times** the number of health claims for women.

As in the previous formulation, the fenugreek seed extract in both new formulas reduces excess blood lipid levels (hyperlipidemia). Fenugreek contains β-sitosterol, an active plant sterol, which has been shown to inhibit 5-alpha-reductase activity – the enzyme responsible for converting excess testosterone to *DHT*(which is the primary molecule that causes hair loss). The SDG (secoisolariciresinol diglucoside) from flax lignans in both formulas also decreases excess cholesterol - the building block of testosterone. Based on new research on the rate of metabolism of SDG in flax lignans (8-12 hours on average), the dosage in both products has been revised from once a day to twice a day for optimum results.

Twice the Strength!
Twice the Power!

Bio-Fen® Plus for Men:

As before, the saw palmetto extract inhibits the enzyme 5-alpha reductase, and this action slows down the conversion of testosterone to dihydrotestosterone (or DHT) – the overabundance of which causes the miniaturization of hair follicles. This activity of the saw palmetto also helps to relieve the urinary symptoms of mild to moderate BPH for men.

The saw palmetto that originally was an extract standardized to 45% free fatty acids, esters, and sterols while the new formula is a 4:1 extract to support the BPH claim. The product still contains these molecules for hair loss, but they are now at proprietary amounts based on our research so that the competition cannot duplicate our formula.

Bio-Fen® Plus for Men will also help to:

- ***Relieve the urologic symptoms associated with mild to moderate benign prostatic hyperplasia - BPH*** *(e.g. weak urine flow, incomplete voiding, frequent daytime and night time urination).*
- ***Reduce elevated blood lipid levels / hyperlipidemia.***

Bio-Fen® Plus for Women

The women's formula is almost the same as the men's formula. The mechanisms and results for the women formula is the same. The only difference is it contains silicon and iron instead of saw palmetto. Silicon has been shown to contribute to hair shaft strength and thus healthy hair growth. It also contains iron which helps prevent iron deficiency. A number of studies have related sub-clinical iron deficiency in women to diffuse hair loss/alopecia.

The increased amount of SDG and other revisions to the regulations allow us to make some additional health claims for *Bio-Fen® Plus for Women.*

Bio-Fen® Plus for Women will also help to:

- ***Reduce elevated blood lipid levels/hyperlipidemia***
- ***Prevent iron deficiency.***
- ***Metabolize carbohydrates, fats and proteins.***

How long must I use Bio-Fen® Plus?

Bio-Fen® Plus for Men capsules are usually effective at stopping hair loss within the first two months. However, since healthy hair grows only about 1 cm each month, it may take up to three months before you notice that hair growth is increased or the rate of hair loss is decreased. Anyone experiencing new growth should see it within four months. In some people the original pigmentation may come back. Once you stop completely your hair growth pattern will slowly go back to the point where you started. However, some people may be able to go with a lower maintenance dose.

What is the quality of Bio-Fen® Plus for Men?

Bio-Fen® Plus for Men is manufactured in Canada according to quality assurance specifications called Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP). This ensures that the ingredients are tested for their level of quality, potency & purity, prior to production and the finished product prior to sale.

Hair Grow Technology (Bio-Fen® Plus) is a progressive company - we continually seek out the latest research on bioactive ingredients, and on regulatory updates in the natural health products industry.

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Intactivism. Germany clears up uncertainty around circumcision

German lawmakers approved a bill Wednesday that explicitly permits male-infant circumcision, ending months of uncertainty after a court ruling that the practice amounts to bodily harm led to an outcry from Jewish and Muslim groups.

Germany's government moved swiftly to draft a law following the Cologne regional court decision in June. The ruling didn't amount to a ban but raised fears of possible prosecutions.

Orthodox Jews attend a meeting of Parliament in Berlin, Wednesday. MICHAEL SOHN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Dieter Graumann, head of Germany's Central Council of Jews, expressed relief at the vote, which passed with 434 lawmakers in favour, 100 against and 46 abstaining.

Proponents of the law noted that failure to protect circumcision would have risked making Germany the only country in the world to ban the practice.

Critics of circumcision argue that the right of the child to bodily integrity trumps a parent's right to make a decision on his behalf.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Espionage. British navy officer sentenced after MI5 sting operation

A Royal Navy petty officer who worked on nuclear submarines was sentenced to eight years in prison Wednesday for passing secrets to British agents impersonating Russian spies.

Edward Devenney, 30, was arrested in March after a sting operation headed by Britain's MI5. He pleaded guilty last month to breaching the Official Secrets Act.

"I have brought great shame to my family, loved ones and the submarine service," said Devenney, from Northern Ireland.

Lawyers said a series of personal blows preceded Devenney's betrayal. He had been accused but cleared of rape, was depressed and had been drinking heavily.

Prosecutor Mark Dennis also said Devenney had lost out on a promotion due to budget cuts and had been warned about excessive work absences.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Et tu, Devenney?

"This was a classic story of betrayal."

Mari Reid, of the Crown Prosecution Service's counterterrorism unit

Mothers and children leave school as a sign prohibiting the use of marijuana in the area is seen in Amsterdam. PETER DEJONG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Amsterdam to ban pot at school

Explicit legislation: My anti-drug.
Schools found it hard to enforce their own rules without clear law

Amsterdam's mayor said Wednesday he would formally ban students from smoking marijuana at school, making the Dutch capital the first city in the Netherlands to do so.

Eberhard van der Laan's introduction of a law that in other countries either already exists or seems so obvious it wouldn't require a rule is the result of the Netherlands' unique drugs policy. Under the "tolerance" principle, marijuana is technically illegal, but police can't prosecute people for possession of small amounts.

That's the loophole that made possible Amsterdam's famed "coffee shops" — cafés where marijuana is sold openly. But it has also had the unwanted side effect that Dutch children are frequently exposed to the drug in public areas.

City spokeswoman Iris Reshef says schools have always forbidden pot but found it difficult to enforce the policy when students smoked on or near campus and challenged administrators to do anything about it.

After a change in national law, the city will now be able to declare as of Jan. 1 "no-toking zones" — areas like schools and playgrounds where weed-smoking is forbidden — under a public-nuisance ordinance. Police can then levy fines against students or anybody else who flouts the rules.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Extracurricular activities

"It's not really what you have in mind as an educator, that children would be turning up for class stoned."

Amsterdam city spokesperson Iris Reshef

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Anti-corruption. Police detain Serbian retail tycoon

Serbia's billionaire retail tycoon and one of the Balkan country's most influential figures was detained Wednesday in what the nationalist government said is a major anti-corruption sweep.

Miroslav Miskovic, one of the richest people in impoverished Serbia, is the owner of Delta Holding company, which deals with retail, real estate, insurance and agriculture business in Serbia and the rest of the Balkans.

He was detained by police along with his son, Marko, and eight other people in connection with the privatization of several road construction and repair companies in 2005 during which the suspects allegedly "gained illegal profit" of about $39 million US, prosecutors said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

EU membership at stake

- Serbia's nationalist government has launched several anti-corruption probes since coming to power in June. Critics say they have been mostly aimed at political opponents and allies of the country's previous pro-Western leadership.
- But Serbia must fight graft, if it wants to fulfil its goal of becoming a member of the European Union.

Trains

Bill Gates ups ownership in CN

Bill Gates has increased his overall stake in Canadian National Railway Co. to about 12 per cent.

Cascade Investment LLC, a company owned by the billionaire founder of tech giant Microsoft, says it has acquired an additional 13,670 shares of Canada's largest railway for $1.25 million.

The investment company now owns a total of 43 million CN shares representing 10 per cent of the company. Gates controls an additional 1.98 per cent of CN stock through the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, a charitable trust. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Airlines put the fun back in flying with cocktails

Air travel may be getting more stressful, but the drinks are getting tastier.
ERIC RISBERG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

In-flight perks. Lost baggage? Delayed connections? At least you can have a mojito

Airlines have found a way to take the edge off the stress of flying and make a few extra bucks along the way: Fancy new cocktails, craft beers and elegant wines.

The drinks advertised in the back of in-flight magazines — or on sleek seatback touchscreens — are starting to resemble those served at nightclubs.

• Virgin America offers Grandma's Coffee, an iced cappuccino with Jack Daniels whiskey for $9 US. Its beer selection includes San Francisco-based 21st Amendment and Black Star from Whitefish, Mont. Both cost $7.

• US Airways has partnered with mixer company Stirrings to sell mojitos and cosmos for $8 each.

• Delta offers the Sky Breeze, which is vodka, Fresca and a splash of cranberry-apple juice over ice for $7. It also sells small-batch bourbon from Woodford Reserve for $7.

Flying isn't what it used to be. Long lines, ever-changing security rules and limited overhead bin space have all made travelling much more stressful.

It's no wonder many passengers are looking for a little escape. Airlines, which created much of this anxiety in the first place, are happy to oblige. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

"It's simply a matter of finding a way to get people to spend money. They see people spending $12, $14, $15 or more for fancy martinis, cosmopolitans or other beverages on the ground."

Henry Harteveldt, a travel-industry analyst with Hudson Crossing

White House, Congress remain far apart on deal, Boehner says

U.S. House Speaker John Boehner said Wednesday that "serious differences" remain between him and President Barack Obama in negotiations on averting automatic spending cuts and tax increases that economists fear could send the U.S. economy over the so-called fiscal cliff.

Boehner's comments came as top Democrats pushed back on GOP demands for tough steps like raising the Medicare eligibility age and curbing the cost-of-living adjustment for Social Security.

Boehner and Obama spoke on the phone twice Tuesday, a day after the president offered to reduce his initial demand for $1.6 trillion US in higher tax revenue over a decade to $1.4 trillion US. But Obama continued to insist that much of the revenue come from raising top tax rates on the wealthy.

Boehner countered later Tuesday with another offer that aides to the Ohio Republican said stuck close to a document delivered to the White House a week ago. A top White House aide, Rob Nabors, came to the Capitol to respond.

Boehner on Wednesday offered a sour assessment less than three weeks before the cliff would strike the economy with $500 billion US worth of spending cuts and higher tax rates if left in place through September.

"There were some offers that were exchanged back and forth yesterday and the president and I had pretty frank conversations about just how far apart we are," the Ohio Republican said after a closed-door meeting with fellow GOP lawmakers in which he advised them not to make plans for the week after Christmas. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Quoted

"I think it's getting worse, not better."

House GOP Whip Kevin McCarthy on the likelihood of averting the fiscal cliff.

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U.S. fiscal cliff imperils energy, mining sectors

Canadian fallout.
Failure to reach deal would hit some types of companies especially hard, observers say

A plunge by Washington over the so-called fiscal cliff would hit Canadian miners and energy companies particularly hard since a slowdown in the U.S. economy would also drag down prices for base metals and oil.

Paul Taylor, chief investment officer for fundamental equities at BMO Asset Management, said Wednesday it will be the cyclical sectors that will be most affected if U.S. lawmakers fail to reach a deal to avoid the automatic tax hikes and spending cuts set to kick in next year.

"We are very much dependent on energy and materials which represent, of course, nearly 50 per cent of the Canadian equity market by market cap," Taylor said. "And with slower U.S. — and read from that slower global economic activity — you would have to expect that the price of base metals and energy on which we depend so heavily would be affected negatively and they would certainly lose a bit." THE CANADIAN PRESS

Consumer concern

- A new poll by Sun Life Financial suggests 63 per cent of Canadians are concerned our economy will be hurt if a deal to avert the fiscal cliff is not reached.
- "Along with high debt levels and a slowing real estate market in Canada, the fiscal cliff situation in the U.S. is giving Canadians another reason to worry about the Canadian economy," said Sadiq Adatia, chief investment officer of Sun Life Global Investments.

Turning the page on e-readers

A young girl looks at a Sony e-book at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October in Frankfurt, Germany. Sales of dedicated e-reading devices are in an "alarmingly precipitous decline" this year after five years of rapid growth, research firm IHS iSuppli says. Full-blown tablets with colour screens are behind the decline, the firm says. IHS expects shipments of e-readers to fall from 23.2 million last year to 14.1 million this year. The rapid rise and now rapid decline of e-readers is unusual even for the volatile consumer electronics industry, says IHS analyst Jordan Selburn, but it's indicative of the broader trend of single-purpose devices like e-readers and cameras losing out to general-purpose ones like tablets and smartphones. GETTY IMAGES FILE

Ignition interlock

Honda recalls 870,000 vehicles

Honda is recalling about 870,000 older-model minivans and SUVs worldwide because they can roll away even though drivers have removed the keys from the ignition. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Market Minute

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Social media.

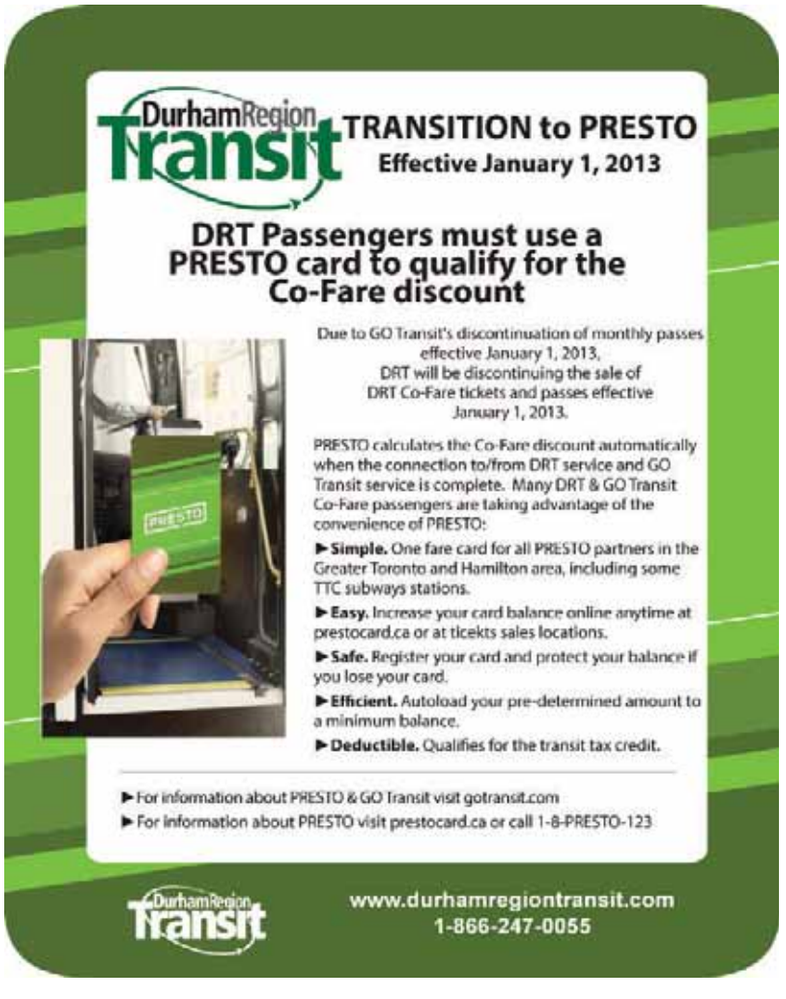
Facebook attempts to make privacy controls more user-friendly

Facebook is trying to make its privacy controls easier to find and understand in an effort to turn the world's largest social network into a more discreet place.

The fine-tuning announced Wednesday will include several revisions that will start rolling out to Facebook Inc.'s more than one billion users in the next few weeks.

The biggest change will be a new "privacy shortcuts" section that will appear as a tiny lock on the right-hand side at the top of people's news feeds. This feature offers a drop-down box where users will be able to get answers to common questions such as "Who can see my stuff?"

Other updates will include a tool that will enable individuals to review all the publicly available pictures identifying them on Facebook. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS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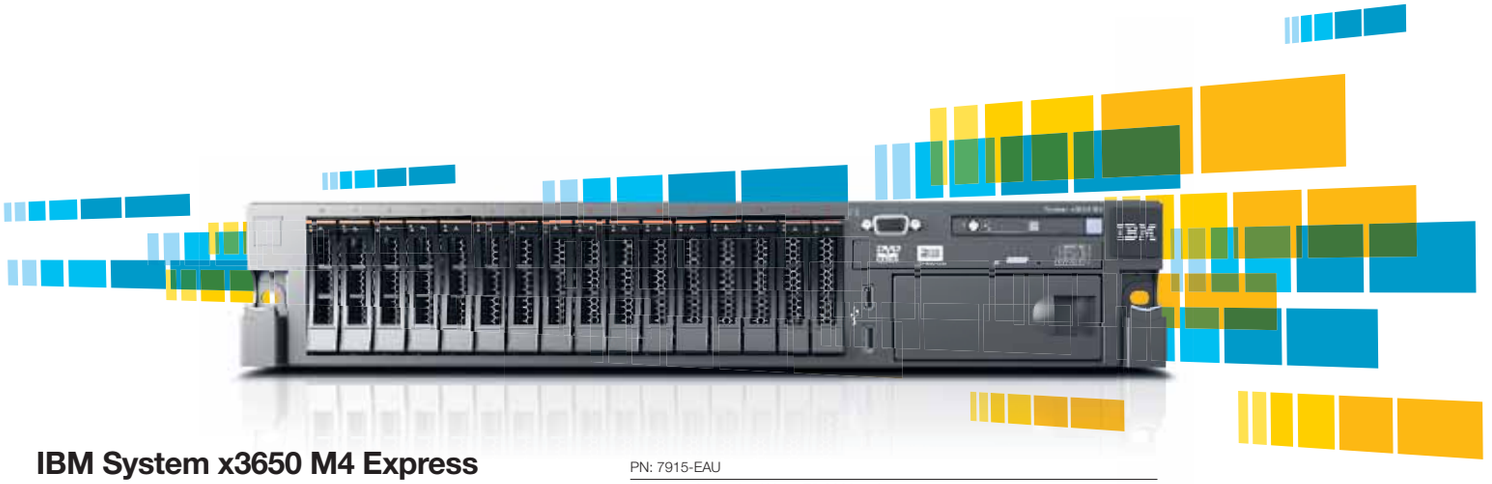

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www.ibm.com/systems/ca/simplicity

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1. TBR Report – "IBM System x® x86 servers: Meeting the demands of today's enterprises by combining value and support," January 2012. **2.** Source: Intel Performance comparison using SPECfp*_rate_base2006 benchmark. Baseline score of 267 on prior generation 2S Intel® Xeon® processor X5690 (3.46 GHz, 6 core, 12MB L3, 6.4 GT/s, 130W) based platform published at www.spec.org as of 6 Sept 2011. Estimated new score of 486 on 2S Intel® Xeon® processor E5-2690 (2.90 GHz, 8 core, 20MB L3, 8.0 GT/s, 135W) based platform is based on Intel internal measured estimates as of 6 Sept 2011 using two Intel® Xeon® processor E5-2690, Turbo Enabled, EIST Enabled, Hyper-Threading Enabled, 64 GB memory (8 x 8 GB DDR3-1600), Red Hat® Enterprise Linux Server 6.1 beta for x86_6, Intel® Compiler 12.1. **3.** x3650 M4 supports up to 768 GB of memory using 32 GB LRDIMMs in it 24 memory slots. Previous generation x3650 M3 supports up to 192 GB of memory. **4.** Ships with 4 1 Gb Ethernet ports standard and supports integrated slot-less 10 Gb Ethernet with Virtual Fabric. Previous generation server includes 2 1 Gb Ethernet slots and requires use of a PCI Express slot to support 10 Gb Ethernet. *Available later in 2012. IBM hardware products are manufactured from new parts or new and serviceable used parts. Regardless, our warranty terms apply. For a copy of applicable product warranties, visit http://www.ibm.com/servers/support/machine_warranties. IBM makes no representation or warranty regarding third-party products or services. IBM, the IBM logo, BladeCenter, System Storage, Storwize and System x are registered trademarks of International Business Machines Corporation registered in many jurisdictions worldwide. Other product and service names might be trademarks of IBM or other companies. For a current list of IBM trademarks, see www.ibm.com/legal/copytrade.shtml. Intel, the Intel logo, Xeon and Xeon Inside are trademarks of Intel Corporation in the U.S. and other countries. All prices and savings estimates are subject to change without notice, may vary according to configuration, are based upon IBM's estimated retail selling prices as of 11/06/12 and may not include storage, hard drive, operating system or other features. Reseller prices and savings to end users may vary. Products are subject to availability. This document was developed for offerings in Canada. IBM may not offer the products, features, or services discussed in this document in other countries. Contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner for the most current pricing in your geographic area. © 2012 IBM Corporation.

SHIELDS UP! RED ALERT!

HE SAYS...
John Mazerolle
metronews.ca

Friends, Romulans, countrymen! Lend me your pointy ears. I come not to bury Star Trek (frankly, Voyager did that), but to praise it.

Star Trek: The Next Generation is on Netflix now, and I'm completely engaged. To my surprise and delight, many of my Facebook friends have independently made it their priority No. 1, and it's resulted in the sort of long, passionate comment threads usually only seen under shared photos of ultrasounds and/or Stephen Harper.

I've complained in this space before that too much modern pop culture is just the repackaging of ideas we've seen before. But I can't deny the movies I've been anticipating most lately: Bobcaygeon The Movie (documentary based on a rock ballad), Les Miserables (movie adaptation of a musical adaptation of a French musical adaptation of a novel), and Star Trek Into Darkness (sequel of a reboot of a movie version of a TV series).

TNG regeneration

Going back to the future is a pleasant reminder of my not-so-dazed-and-confused youth — I get older, the Enterprise crew stay the same age.

I can get all snobby at Men in Black 3, but if it's John's Crap: The Sequel, then my objections mysteriously disappear. In truth, if they made a movie of The Wire, I'd probably show up in costume (rumpled suit with vomit stains).

So I apologize for my earlier complaints. Star Trek: Regurgitation is just fine by me.

I was the perfect age for the original run of TNG — 11 years old when it debuted as a juvenile imitation of the original series, and 17 when it was over, by then a Hugo Award-winning masterpiece beloved by virgins worldwide. So going back to the future is a pleasant reminder of my not-so-dazed-and-confused youth — I get older, the Enterprise crew stay the same age.

In a world where people no longer meet in town halls and churches, some of us get our sense of community by discussing the legends of Vulcans or Orcs or hard-drinking ad execs. Whether that's a step forward or back I'll leave to you.

But what fun to get lost in the minutiae of a 24th century, where anything can happen except good roles for women. How wonderful to laugh at the stuff they got wrong (Picard's personal computer is amusingly thick) and got right (Picard and Riker discuss a European union). How satisfying to gauge a fellow Trekker's knowledge level by their recognition of "Make it so" (beginner), "THERE. ARE. FOUR. LIGHTS!" (intermediate), and "All Husnock — everywhere" (expert).

My excitement led me to decide that I'm going to watch every worthwhile Star Trek episode, which after several hours perusing reviews and ratings online I've determined is 30 episodes of the original, six episodes of the animated series, 54 episodes of TNG, 69 of DS9, 29 of Voyager and 25 of Enterprise. (I just hope the experience doesn't turn me into a nerd.)

It's good to boldly go where I've already been before.

Taking us out of here, again: The cast of Star Trek: The Next Generation.
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Love is sweeter by the dozen

KIN CHEUNG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Last triple-date to wed your mate

Many couples kissed during a mass wedding ceremony at the Peak in Hong Kong, on Wednesday. At least 700 couples were expected to get married on the date 12/12/12, the last such triple-date in this year in Hong Kong as they believe the date will bring them everlasting love.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

When the clock strikes 12:12

Twelve-word vows say it all

KEITH SRAKOCIC/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Federal Judge Donetta Ambrose, left, signals that there are five more minutes before she starts the wedding between Deputy U.S. Marshal Brian Allen, centre, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Amy Johnson in federal court in Pittsburgh on Wednesday. Ambrose started their wedding at 12:12 p.m. at the couple's request, where they exchanged 12-word vows on 12/12/12. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Chinese numerology

"One is considered a yang number, while two is considered a yin number. Combining the two can offer new couples balance."

Marketing firm Back Bar USA in a press release announcing its $1,212,120 Las Vegas wedding package that included the use of a private jet, watches and earrings for the wedding party, and dinner at a Michelin-rated restaurant.

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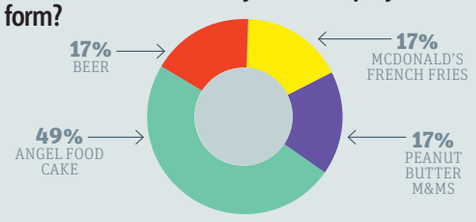
Pizza Hut is making a pizza-scented perfume. What other foods would you like in spray-on form?



Twitter

@panicmanual: yoko ono covers katy perry, paul mccartney joins Nirvana. the rivalry continues.

@Djay_ICE: Hope raptors win today, we really need it. #teamraptors

@CNScoville: A few people decided out of "courtesy" to interpret council's "tone" and cancel needed work without making sure. Wow.

@itsdgc: Shearling coat monkey roaming an Ikea? Paul McCartney fronting Nirvana? If I didn't know better, I'd say the Mayans were on to something.

@andyreimer: Seems a bit harsh even for #Bieber. The paisley tie thing is kind of #creepy too.

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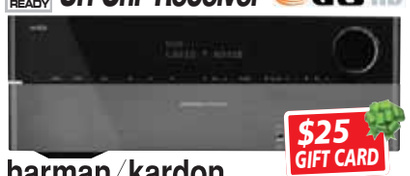

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That's a Rapp: Singer takes loss and turns it into musical

Anthony Rapp begins his one-man show Without You today. HANDOUT

Adaptation. Performer's book about his mother's death gets put on stage

BACKSTAGE PASS
Ian Gormely
scene@metronews.ca

Laying out the material for his memoir, the basis of the new one-man show Without You, was "the hardest thing I ever did," admits Anthony Rapp.

The project came out of left field. Rapp, still best known for playing Mark Cohen in the original off-Broadway production of Rent, was approached to write a book about the death of his mother, an event that coincided with the tumultuous period where the groundbreaking musical took off in the aftermath of its creator, Jonathan Larson's death. "There was no way I could write about my mom and losing her without writing about Rent because it was happening at the same time."

The memoir took Rapp six years to complete. "It was literally like the cartoon anvil hanging over my head for all those years," he says.

The idea to adapt his book into a musical came from "a young producer who I didn't know that well." Yet the gentleman was persuasive enough to get Rapp's creative juices flowing.

The resulting production follows the actor's tumultuous struggle to come to terms with personal loss. "It proves that it's possible to move through these things," he says. "You live with grief, you live with sadness, but it's part of life."

In writing his memoir, Rapp "had to live through it again to really get into the truth of the moment. It was hard enough to live through the first time." Yet he finds revisiting those events night after night on stage is a renewing experience. And audiences are connecting with Rapp's journey. "One of the most common things (I hear) is, 'I left the theatre and I called my mom,'" he says. "That's not small stuff."

Without You plays Dec. 13 to Jan 6. at the Panasonic Theatre, 651 Yonge St. mirvish.com.

Child's play

Without You is billed as a one-man show, but Rapp is accompanied by a five-piece band. Amongst the songs performed are a number of selections Larson wrote for Rent, including the show's title track, which Rapp sang at his mother's memorial service. Almost all of them appear in truncated form as "excerpts and signposts." Rounding out the selections are a number of songs Rapp wrote himself, both during the period of his life covered by the show and originals written especially for it. Capping off the collection is R.E.M.'s Losing My Religion, the song Rapp sang during his original audition for Rent.

Do you hear what we hear?

Weighing up this year's festive albums.
As usual, the latest holiday releases are a mixed bag, but Metro helps you sort the naughty from the nice

PAT HEALY
Metro World News in Boston

Sufjan Stevens' version of Christmas is an alternative one. ALL IMAGES HANDOUT

A Different Kind of Christmas – Various artists

Naughty: You're probably not familiar with many of the artists on these 23 tracks. Audio Stepchild? Renzo Charlez? Freshwadda Brooks? Have all of these great hip-hop artists been hiding on the North Pole until now?

Nice: This compilation comes courtesy of Hoopla Worldwide/LRT/INgrooves Fontana ... all imprints we had also never heard of before now. But some of the participants have affiliations with Parliament Funkadelic and Nappy Roots. The beats here mostly have a G-Funk feel with little samples of carols thrown in and the rhymes are super positive. Check out 1st Blood and Buffalo Stille's Some Kentucky Bourbon on Christmas Eve and Da Product and J Bill's It Seems Like We Forgot for some of the most festive holiday hip-hop since Run DMC's Christmas in Hollis.

Silver & Gold: Songs for Christmas, Vols. 6-10 – Sufjan Stevens

Naughty: Is Sufjan Stevens trying to take up all our free time this season? Sure, this is a gorgeous collection of 58 holiday-ish tracks (we say "ish" because how is Prince's Alphabet Street a holiday song?). But keep in mind that Stevens recorded these songs over six years. Listeners may want to pace themselves too.

Nice: There are a few songs on here that are the sonic equivalent of sugar plums dancing in your head. Draw the curtains, plug in your tree and zone out to the beautifully textured 10-minute plus opuses Christmas Unicorn and The Child with the Star on His Head.

Cheers, It's Christmas – Blake Shelton

Naughty: His role as a coach on The Voice has earned Blake Shelton a new base of fans who wouldn't ordinarily like his brand of country music. That said, if you don't ordinarily like his brand of country music, you won't like this album.

Nice: Shelton is such a likable personality that this is highly tolerable stuff. Plus, he handpicked some of the most likable side-kicks to guide his sleigh, like Reba, Kelly Clarkson, his wife Miranda Lambert and the king of palatable Christmas charisma, Michael Bublé, who co-wrote one of the songs here. Basically, the cover pic of Shelton in front of the fireplace says it all: It's old-fashioned, steeped in tradition, comfortable and not exactly cool.

Isn't This World Enough? – Various Artists

Naughty: The problem with this post-record industry climate is that there aren't enough Scroogey label CEOs to say, "Yer holiday song stinks!" Therefore, this 14-song comp from the Nettwerk Music Group has a few stinkers from Ash Koley and Jay Brannan. Bah humbug!

Nice: The title track, by the Scottish six-piece Admiral Fallow, might not be the most obvious holiday song (sample lyric: "You don't need to hang your hat on belief in bumper stickers") but there's something classic about it that makes it malleable, the way that Put a Little Love In Your Heart kind of became a holiday staple after it was used in Scrooged. Also worth noting: This compilation kicks off with a rockin' Fun. tune!

The Grinch says ...

- **This Christmas – John Travolta and Olivia Newton John**

If this collection came out in 1980 then maybe there would be a reason for it to exist, but in 2012 there's no need for these 13 tracks. The forced smiles while sipping cocoa on the cover shows that their old chemistry is now gone. We don't like to be Grinchy, but this is the sonic equivalent of reindeer poop.

Holidays Rule – Various Artists

Naughty: Speaking of compilations that start with a song by Fun., the We Are Young trio have spread themselves too thin for the holidays. With their track, they take a Sleigh Ride down Broadway and make an ill-advised turn into '80s territory. Rufus Wainwright and Sharon Van Etten also deserve a lump of coal for their empty version of Baby, It's Cold Outside.

Nice: This one delivers the most bang for your buck. The Shins run McCartney's Wonderful Christmastime through a Beach Boys filter and turn it into something great. McCartney himself is on here too. Other great performances include Calexico, Eleanor Friedberger and Andrew Bird.

Merry Christmas, Baby – Rod Stewart

Naughty: Stewart exhumes the voice of Ella Fitzgerald for a duet of What Are You Do-ing New Year's Eve? Let's just hope there is no "live" performance, a la Virtual 2Pac.

Nice: Rod's light rock swing is actually contagious, and you may find yourself saying, "Hey, play that again!" about the original song that Stewart co-wrote, Red-Suited Super Man. Then you'll realize what you just said and lie that you were just kidding. Cee-Lo, Mary J. Blige, Bublé and Trombone Shorty also turn in notable cameos.

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The many faces and styles of Rihanna. HANDOUT

Breaking down Rihanna's ever changing hairstyles

Exclusive interview. Metro speaks to pop star's personal hair stylist about what goes into creating her public image

ANNA SOKOLOWSKI
scene@metronews.ca

Pop sensation Rihanna is just about as famous for her intense style changes as her incredible career in music.

The young Hollywood starlet, whose exotic beauty is inherited from the island of Barbados, has been present in the public eye for the past seven years, ever since her breakthrough hit Pon de Replay in 2005.

Rihanna's recent tour that went with the name 777 had the entire world talking yet again — the seven-day tour started from Los Angeles and finished off in New York with stops in Mexico City, Toronto, Stockholm, Paris, Berlin and London. Apart from a strictly selected list of press guests and fans, Rihanna's little entourage included her right-hand man — her personal hair stylist Yusef Williams.

Metro received the exclusive opportunity to dive deeper into Rihanna's style secrets with Williams, who has quickly become one of America's most wanted hair specialists.

"My brain is always working when it comes to creating new looks," Williams declares.

The stylist admits that he always keeps Rihanna's unique taste and ideas in mind when putting together imaginative style creations for the artist.

When the two are apart and searching for inspiration separately, Rihanna often sends Williams inspirational pictures through her phone.

"We aim to create looks that Rihanna feels comfortable in, which makes my work so spontaneous. Actually, we pull a lot of inspiration from men's magazines," Williams reveals.

The stylist claims that the superstar's future looks are impossible to plan ahead of time.

"Her current look is short on the sides, but it could be practically anything tomorrow. That's the beauty of Rihanna," the stylist concludes.

Lincoln, Les Mis lead the way with SAG nominations

Actors Taye Diggs, left, and Busy Phillips announce Daniel Day-Lewis as a nominee for outstanding performance by a male actor in a leading role for his performance in Lincoln. CHRIS PIZZELLO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Screen Actors Guild.
Silver Linings Playbook also receives four nods as award season kicks into high gear

The Civil War saga Lincoln, the musical Les Misérables and the comic drama Silver Linings Playbook boosted their Academy Awards prospects Wednesday with four nominations apiece for the Screen Actors Guild Awards.

All three films were nominated for overall performance by their casts. Also nominated for best ensemble cast were the Iran hostage-crisis thriller Argo and the British retiree adventure The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel.

Directed by Steven Spielberg, Lincoln also scored individual nominations for Daniel Day-Lewis in the title role as best actor, Sally Field for supporting actress as Mary Todd Lincoln and Tommy Lee Jones for supporting actor as abolitionist firebrand Thaddeus Stevens.

Les Misérables, from The King's Speech director Tom Hooper, had nominations for Hugh Jackman for best actor as Victor Hugo's long-suffering hero Jean Valjean and Anne Hathaway for supporting actress as a woman fallen into prostitution, plus a nomination for its stunt ensemble.

Silver Linings Playbook, made by The Fighter director David O. Russell, also had lead-acting nominations for Bradley Cooper and Jennifer Lawrence as lost souls who find a second chance at love and Robert De Niro for supporting actor as a football-obsessed dad.

Besides Lawrence, best-actress nominees are Jessica Chastain as a CIA analyst pursuing Osama bin Laden in Zero Dark Thirty; Marion Cotillard as a woman who finds romance after tragedy in Rust and Bone; Helen Mirren as Alfred Hitchcock's strong-willed wife in Hitchcock; and Naomi Watts as a woman caught in the devastation of a tsunami in The Impossible.

Joining Cooper, Day-Lewis and Jackman in the best-actor field are John Hawkes as a polio victim aiming to lose his virginity in The Sessions and Denzel Washington as a boozy airline pilot in Flight.

Golden Globes

Nominations for the Golden Globes, the second-biggest film honours after the Oscars, come out Thursday.

- **Women.** Maggie Smith had four individual and ensemble nominations. Along with sharing the ensemble honour for Best Exotic Marigold Hotel, Smith joined the cast of Downton Abbey among TV ensemble contenders and had nominations for supporting film actress as a cranky retiree in Marigold Hotel and TV drama actress for Downton Abbey. Nicole Kidman earned two individual nominations as supporting film actress.
- **Men.** Bryan Cranston had three overall nominations as best actor in a TV drama for Breaking Bad, which is entering its final season.

SAG nominees are almost all familiar names in Hollywood's awards season. Eighteen of the 20 film acting contenders are past Academy Awards nominees and 13 have won Oscars, among them five two-time winners. Only Cooper and Jackman have never before earned Oscar nominations.

One of the year's most-acclaimed films, Paul Thomas Anderson's The Master, earned only one nomination, supporting actor for Philip Seymour Hoffman as a mesmerizing cult leader.

The film was snubbed on nominations for ensemble, lead actor Joaquin Phoenix and supporting actress Amy Adams.

Other individual performances overlooked by SAG voters include Anthony Hopkins in the title role of Hitchcock, Keira Knightley in the title role of Anna Karenina, Bill Murray as Franklin Roosevelt in Hyde Park on Hudson and Argo director Ben Affleck, who also starred in the film.

The SAG Awards will be presented Jan. 27. The guild nominations are one of Hollywood's first major announcements on the long road to the Feb. 24 Oscars Awards, whose nominations will be released Jan. 10.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Newcomers discuss joining the Tolkien universe

The Hobbit. Actors talk about how welcoming Peter Jackson's crew was

HEIDI PATALANO
Metro World News

In director Peter Jackson's eyes, Martin Freeman was always Bilbo Baggins. While Ian Holm does reprise his role as the older, wiser Bilbo in The Hobbit, there was something about the veteran of The Office and the BBC's Sherlock series that made Freeman an irresistible choice for this younger, more anxious version of Tolkien's most famous character.

British actor Richard Armitage plays Dwarves' leader Thorin Oakenshield in the film The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey. CHRIS YOUNG/THE CANADIAN PRESS

"Martin is the only person that we ever wanted for that role and that was really before we met Martin," says Jackson. "We just felt he had qualities that would be perfect for Bilbo — that essential kind of fussy English, slightly repressed quality. We thought he'd be very good at playing that. He's a dramatic actor. He's not a comedian. But he's a dramatic actor who has a very rare comedic skill."

While not originally a fan of the books himself, Freeman was eager to join an already bonded cast and crew.

"My experience of Middle-earth was through the films which I think are still great pieces of work," Freeman says. "From my point of view of turning up and being involved with it, it was a pleasure to be with Pete. It was a pleasure to be with a crew that committed, to get to know actors I knew a little bit from home, but not very well who subsequently became friends … It was great. It had a way of not being intimidating."

Quoted

"In terms of coming into an existing franchise, we were just always made to feel very welcome, like we were coming into a family."

Richard Armitage
Talking about stepping into the Lord of the Rings production group.

Also joining the cast was British actor Richard Armitage, who takes on the character of Thorin, a would-be dwarf king out to avenge the deaths of his father and grandfather. Despite the fact that so many of the cast and crew from The Lord of the Rings series had returned for these three films, Armitage felt the loving embrace of a committed group of artists.

"In terms of coming into an existing franchise, we were just always made to feel very welcome, like we were coming into a family," he says.

"So many people returned that were working on the Rings trilogy. It was just very easy."

Easy in one sense, but quite daunting in another. With the cast committed to a year and a half of shooting, the actual filming process was no casual stroll through Rivendell.

"Working with Peter, the thing that I've realized is that just when you think you've given him everything you've got, he asks you for more and somehow you find it," says Armitage.

"My own limitations of myself, I've had to let those drop because there's always more to give."

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I dream a dream ... of winning an Oscar

Les Misérables. How exactly does a costume designer go about dressing three A-list actors in three roles of a lifetime?

RICHARD PECKETT
richard.peckett@metro.lu

Les Misérables hasn't hit theatres yet, but there's already talk of Academy Awards.

"The whole thing is a very big tour de force for an Oscar," says its costume designer Paco Delgado, who has worked on critical hits such as Bad Education and The Skin I Live In.

Delgado thinks that the early rave reviews come down to the fact that it's the first film version of a musical to feature live recording as opposed to lip synched performances of pre-recorded songs.

But the movie's starry team might also have something to do with it. The Oscar winner Tom Hooper, best known for The King's Speech, directed Hugh Jackman, Russell Crowe and Anne Hathaway in what critics are calling roles of a lifetime.

"When Anne Hathaway sang I Dreamed a Dream, I was moved to tears," Delgado said.

Delgado talked Metro through how he underscored the movie's three most emotive performances with costume.

The inspiration

"Costumes always have a theatrical kind of feeling, whereas clothes are very real, and what I tried to do with this movie is to get into the skin of the character whom I'm dressing," Delgado explains.

"We used a vibrant red dress, which was particularly striking styled with (Anne Hathaway's) short cropped hair," Delgado says.

"He wears a uniform pretty much for the entire film," Delgado says of Russell Crowe.

Anne Hathaway

Anne Hathaway: Distressed clothes

You'd have to be living under a rock to have missed all the entertainment headlines about Anne Hathaway's 25 pound weight loss for her role as the tragic emaciated Fantine. It turns out the clothes went through the ringer as well.

"We would sand down the fabrics and bleach the materials," he explains. "And we even used blow torches to make the clothes look as though they'd been through a lot of stress," says Delgado.

"Fantine starts outs as a pretty girl in cotton mousseline dresses, which are old but still pretty, and gradually we introduce coarser materials to show her descent into prostitution," says the designer.

Les Mis in numbers

2,200
costumes in total

1,500
historic outfits made from scratch

$1.1 M
spent on wardrobe overall

Hugh Jackman: Bringing the lowly to life

Hugh Jackman's Jean Valjean is a former convict and an outcast. So Delgado used "blood red rags, rough linens and materials like hessian and hemp to reflect his social position and discomfort."

"After he breaks parole, Valjean becomes more sophisticated in his dress, particularly during his ascension to village mayor," Delgado explains.

Russell Crowe: Dressing a black soul

"He wears a uniform pretty much for the entire film. So he's not the most interesting character (to dress) in that respect," Delgado says. "Russell really wanted to show a man who was becoming bitter with age, so we decided to gradually darken his uniform until it was almost as black as his soul."

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METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

The Word

The year in celebrity divorces

THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

Yesterday we looked at the big celebrity engagements of 2012. (Aw, love!) So today we'll gaze at the years big celebrity divorces. (Boo, dead love!)

Katy Perry and Russell Brand
Announcement: Dec. 30 (so technically this occurred in 2011 but the fallout was in 2012. Work with me here, folks).
Length of marriage: 14 months
Reason: "She's young, successful and dedicated," Brand said of Perry and her career in an interview with Howard Stern in July. "(The reality is) you can't fully understand it until you do it. I was really into the idea of marriage and having children." Translation: The recovering alcoholic wanted to settle down; she wanted to party.
Contention level: Low. Instead of anger, Perry just seems embarrassed she was ever associated with the comedian. She recently hid under a table to avoid seeing him while she was having lunch with new beau John Mayer.

Heidi Klum and Seal
Announcement: Jan. 23
Length of marriage: 7 years
Reason: Klum was apparently disturbed about Seal's "inability to control his temper."
Contention level: High. The two are currently involved in a very bitter custody dispute over their four children and Klum's estimated $70 million fortune.

Katie Holmes and Tom Cruise
Announcement: June 29
Length of marriage: 5 years
Reason: Cruise was reportedly blindsided by Holmes' highly orchestrated divorce proceedings. One reason for the split? Us Weekly claims that the couple "fought viciously" over Scientology parenting.
Contention level: Medium. The divorce was fast and furious (by comparison, Kim Kardashian and Kris Humphries are still in negotiations). Cruise seems sad; Holmes ecstatic. And Suri is still well-dressed.

Amy Poehler and Will Arnett
Announcement: Sept. 6
Length of marriage: 9 years
Reason: Their romance "fizzled out," RadarOnline.com reported.
Contention level: Low. They are too adorable to be mad at one another.

Lindsay Lohan. ALL PHOTOS GETTY

Lohan won't follow Max and The Wanted

Lindsay Lohan has put an end to her gallivanting with on-the-road British boy band The Wanted, cancelling plans to follow the group to London and then Dubai, according to E! News.

Some suspected the change of plans was caused by Lohan's legal troubles, but the starlet is allowed to leave the country while on probation. Perhaps it's because her recent infatuation with Wanted member Max George reportedly isn't all that serious. "All they're doing is hanging out," a source says.

Twitter

@KChenoweth
No one will see Paranormal Activity 4 with me.

@RealMichelleT
What would the Dowager Countess do?

@msleamichele
Another great day of work at #glee! Time to get some rest now! Another big day tomorrow! Xoxo

@rustyrockets
"@JonahHill: Ok so I've decided I'm going to get married soon, I'm just not sure to who yet" I'm free.

Florence Welch

Florence the peacemaker at recent concert

Florence + the Machine singer Florence Welch turned peacemaker at a recent concert in Scotland, halting the show when she spotted two fans quarreling in the front row, according to Us Weekly. "I can't have a fight in front of me while I'm singing this song! No fighting allowed," she said. "I don't know what's happening but I'd like it to stop. It doesn't matter whose fault it is." Others in the crowd weren't pleased with the interruption and had begun chuckling nervously, causing Welch to chide them as well: "Excuse me, all of you. Stop it," she said. "I'm sorry all of you if you're upset." Welch then hopped off stage and hugged one of the fighting girls who appeared to be crying.

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Bask in Rita's aura

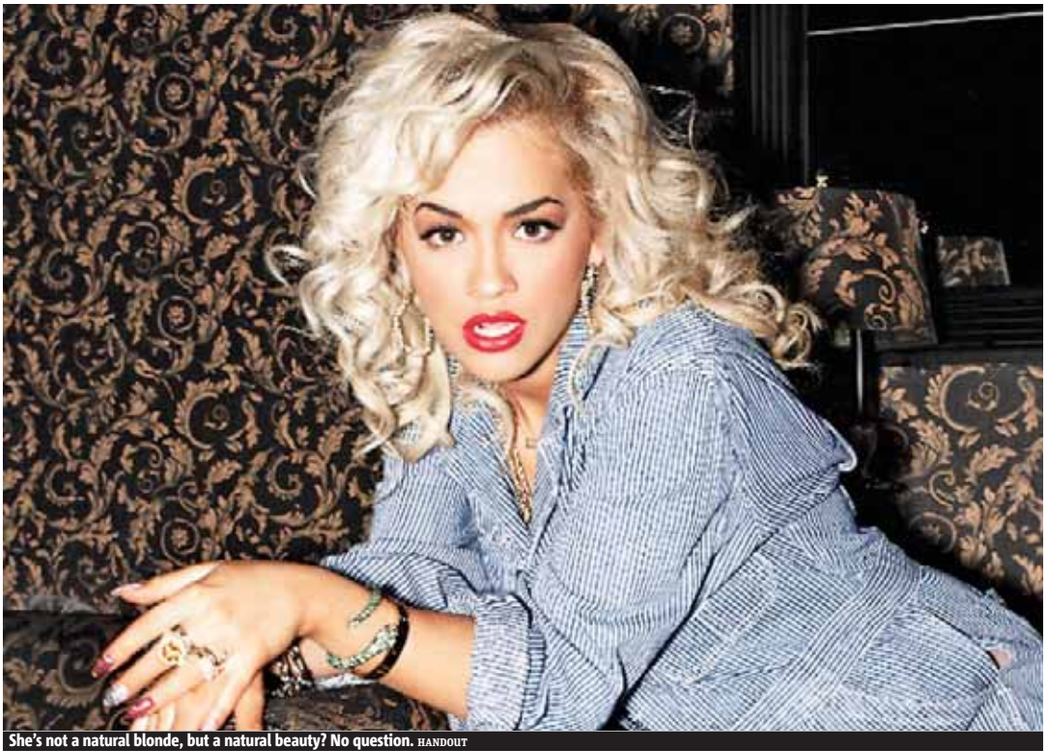
Jay-Z's protege spills about her two-tone lip, her knack for nurturing her locks and her long-standing love for Lopez

ROMINA McGUINNESS
life@metronews.ca

No one rocks a strong brow and bold lip quite like Rita Ora does. And so we felt compelled to pick her brain about her trademark look. In the process, Jay-Z's protege gave us a few tips on how to rock a two-tone red pout and the celebrity (it's J.Lo!) whose complexion she covets the most.

On her morning routine...
"In the day, it takes about 10 to 15 minutes (to put my makeup on). If I don't have to wear makeup, I don't. I don't mind being caught on camera bare-faced. And I think having healthy, glowing skin is really important. On off days, I'll wear bronzer and a lipstick, but that's it. A red lip and black liquid eyeliner would be my easiest look. It looks good on blondes — but this is all bleached! "

...and fancy, get-dressed-up, evening ritual
"If I have an event, I might stick some lashes on and maybe put on some golden, bronzy eye shadow, something to make my eyes stand out a bit more. But in the evening, it takes me probably about 25 minutes to do my makeup — if I'm doing it properly. Do you know what I'm doing right now? The other day, I wore a dress that had pink and red, so I made my top lip pink and my bottom lip red. That was quite cool. We invented that with my makeup artist. Or you can do bright red on the outside and dark red on the inside and blend it all together. The main thing is making your skin look flawless, like you have no makeup on."



She's not a natural blonde, but a natural beauty? No question. HANDOUT

Face the facts

"J.LO is my skin idol, I love her. Is that really crazy? Do I sound like a psychopath?"
Rita Ora

Her skin care before bed
"I wash my face every night and use Crème de la Mer moisturizing soft cream as it makes my skin feel nice. But my skin isn't too bad actually."

The hair: to spray or not to spray
"(My hair) takes a lot of work. I used to have really long hair, but when I started dying it and using curling irons and stuff, it dried it out. I'd literally have a hair spray in my bag, which isn't good. Now I use clip-ins so that I don't damage my own hair. I also do a lot of treatments — a lot of oils and masks. But your hair will only absorb so much oil. You also have to eat good. So I eat things like fish for the oils."

Lipstick or lip gloss?
"I love a strong lip. I would see women like Marilyn Monroe and Gwen Stefani with red lips and they never looked like they gave a s—t about what anyone had to say about them. They had such confidence. They were just hot and sexy and not afraid to be different. When I put red lipstick on, I want to be like them."

About that tan
(I feel the most beautiful) when I've got a tan!

Her beauty icons
"Kim Kardashian has good makeup. But J.LO is my skin idol, I love her. Is that really crazy? Do I sound like a psychopath? My mum's really good with makeup. She always has a different look. She used to say, 'Don't do a lip and an eye. Pick one.' I follow her advice ... sometimes."

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IN THIS HECTIC MODERN WORLD, TWITTER HAS BECOME A COOL AND SUCCINCT WAY OF COMMUNICATING. IT ALLOWS ME TO BE ACCESSIBLE, INSTANTLY SPEAK MY MIND, AND CONNECTS ME WITH ALL KINDS OF PEOPLE. WHETHER IT'S A FASHION QUESTION OR YOU JUST WANT TO COMMENT ON LIFE'S BIGGER PICTURE, I'D LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU.

@Jeanne_Beker: Prepping for launch of TheLoop.ca this Thursday! With @Killer_Kurves @BigHipsRedLips @FlawsofCouture

@Jeanne_Beker: My mom sure does love her chocolate... Ready to start a sweet 93rd year!

@Jeanne_Beker: YUMMY!! In the #CTV lobby with model hunks Oren @choosethefro + @JosephCannata @TheMarilynShow

@Jeanne_Beker: With the cool+sexy @jianghomeshi @ArleneDickinson Xmas bash!

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The Kit

Canadian street style

Spotted in: Halifax

Sam Rich

Student and stylist at Reginald magazine

Age: 21

What she's wearing
Kelly Wearstler coat, House of Harlow sunglasses, Chanel bag, vintage Chanel boots, J Brand jeans, Autumn cashmere sweater.

Her inspiration
"I take inspiration from blogs like Atlantic Pacific and Man Repeller, from my friends, and my mom is my ultimate fashion inspiration."

THE KIT PHOTOBLOGGER: MEGHAN TANSEY WHITTON, FASHIONEASTHALIFAX.COM

THE KIT IS A MULTIPLATFORM BEAUTY AND FASHION BRAND WHICH INCLUDES AN INTERACTIVE MAGAZINE AND DYNAMIC APP, A WEBSITE, KIT CHAT — AN E-NEWSLETTER PROGRAM, AND A WEEKLY NEWSPAPER SECTION TOO!

Baby shrimp and crab meat make a delicious duo in delicate fried cakes

ROSE REISMAN
for more, visit
rosereisman.com

I love the traditional fried crab cakes served in restaurants, but are they ever high in calories and fat! Here I've used a combination of baby shrimp and crabmeat and sautéed them in a very small amount of oil. The low-fat mayonnaise sauce goes beautifully with these delicate cakes.

They end up at 99 calories and 5.8 grams of fat per serving.

Ingredients

Cakes
- 6 oz chopped crabmeat (or surimi)
- 4 oz baby shrimp (cooked)
- 3 tbsp light mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 1/4 cup chopped green onion
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro
- 1/2 cup dried unseasoned bread crumbs
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp crushed fresh garlic
- 1/2 tsp crushed fresh ginger
- 1 tsp Dijon mustard
- 2 tsp vegetable oil

Sauce
- 1 tbsp light mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp low-fat sour cream
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- 1 tsp low-sodium soy sauce

Garnish
- 1/4 cup finely diced red bell pepper

1. To make the cakes, combine the crabmeat, shrimp, mayonnaise, lemon juice, green onion, cilantro, bread crumbs, egg, garlic, ginger and mustard in a food processor. Finely chop until the mixture just comes together. Don't purée. Alternatively, chop by hand.

2. Form into 6 cakes.

3. Spray a non-stick skillet with cooking oil. Add the vegetable oil and place over medium heat. Sauté the cakes for about 5 minutes per side, or just until browned and hot.

Asian Crab and Shrimp Cakes

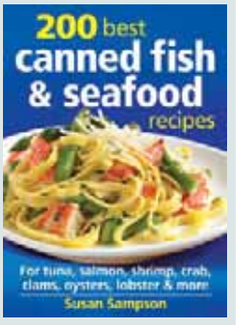
This recipe serves six. BRIAN MACDONALD, FROM ROSE REISMAN'S COMPLETE LIGHT KITCHEN (WHITECAP BOOKS)

4. To make the sauce, combine the mayonnaise, sour cream, sesame oil and soy sauce in a serving bowl. Whisk until smooth.

5. Garnish the cakes with the diced red pepper and serve the sauce alongside. ROSE REISMAN'S COMPLETE LIGHT KITCHEN (WHITECAP BOOKS) BY ROSE REISMAN

Cookbook of the Week

Seafood made easy



Love seafood but don't have the time to get creative with cooking it? Enter 200 Best Canned Fish & Seafood Recipes by Susan Sampson.

The book is full of traditional and updated recipes, new creations and canned twists on classic fish dishes. The recipes feature canned seafood that can be found in virtually any supermarket across Canada: tuna, crab, salmon, mackerel, cod, sardines, clams, oysters, mussels and more.

Master dishes such as Salad Nicoise, Fish Tacos, Lemon Pepper-Shrimp Pasta, Lobster Mushroom Bisque, Crab Cakes, Tuna and Spinach Risotto and more. METRO

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Hip Shakin' in Cuba
Dance in Cuba is a perfect representation of its mix of cultures. Cuban-style salsa is set apart by its sensual nature; partners often break to tease each other without making contact. Originally a street dance in Cuba, the conga line is rooted in carnival music or derived from African slave celebrations. In the 1950s, a dance teacher brought the cha-cha-cha back to England where it spiraled into an international hip shaking craze. Test out your moves when you visit!
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Luxury condo in North Etobicoke

The Lexington Condominiums is located near the Humber River and several golf courses. SUBMITTED

Meet the condo

- **What.** Lexington Condominiums
- **Location.** 840 Queens Plate Dr. in Etobicoke
- **Website.** lexingtoncondo.com
- **Sizes.** From 568 to 1,011 square feet
- **Pricing.** From $243,900 to $467,900

The project overview

Lexington is a new condominium under construction in North Etobicoke with the highest of design and architectural standards. The project provides luxury, lifestyle and prime location just minutes away from everything you need in Etobicoke.

Location and transit

Conveniently located across from Pearson International airport and Highways 401, 407, 409 and 427, commuters can be on their way in minutes. Lexington is located near the Etobicoke GO rail station. Commuters can be in the downtown core within a half hour.

In the neighbourhood

Located near the Humber River and several golf courses, this location offers residents a multitude of outdoor activities. Close to attractions such as the Woodbine Shopping Centre, Woodbine Race Track and the upcoming Woodbine Live Entertainment complex.

Building amenities

Equipped with five-star building amenities, Lexington includes a well-equipped fitness centre, party room complete with bar, catering kitchen and lounge to relax with family and friends and an elegant lobby with concierge. Maintenance fees approximately $0.49 per square feet

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5.24%	CIBC	3.20%
5.24%	HSBC	3.10%
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3.09%	ING	3.00%
5.24%	RBC	3.20%
4.99%	SCOTIA	3.10%
5.24%	TD	3.20%
5.24%	NATIONAL	3.20%
2.84%	BROKER	2.60%

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Adding some context to the condo count

BRYAN TUCKEY
President and CEO of the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) can be found at twitter.com/bildgta, facebook.com/bildgta, and bildblogs.ca.

Last week, the Bank of Canada released its Financial System Review — a 63-page report addressing a wide range of vital factors affecting Canada's economy.

The following morning I discovered that headline writers chose to focus their attention on the segment surrounding the condominium market in the GTA. Residents of the GTA are quite fortunate to live in a region with a robust and successful condominium market, and it is important to work together to gain a complete understanding of the GTA's complex housing market. Having said that, I will use this space to add a bit of context and clarity for my readers.

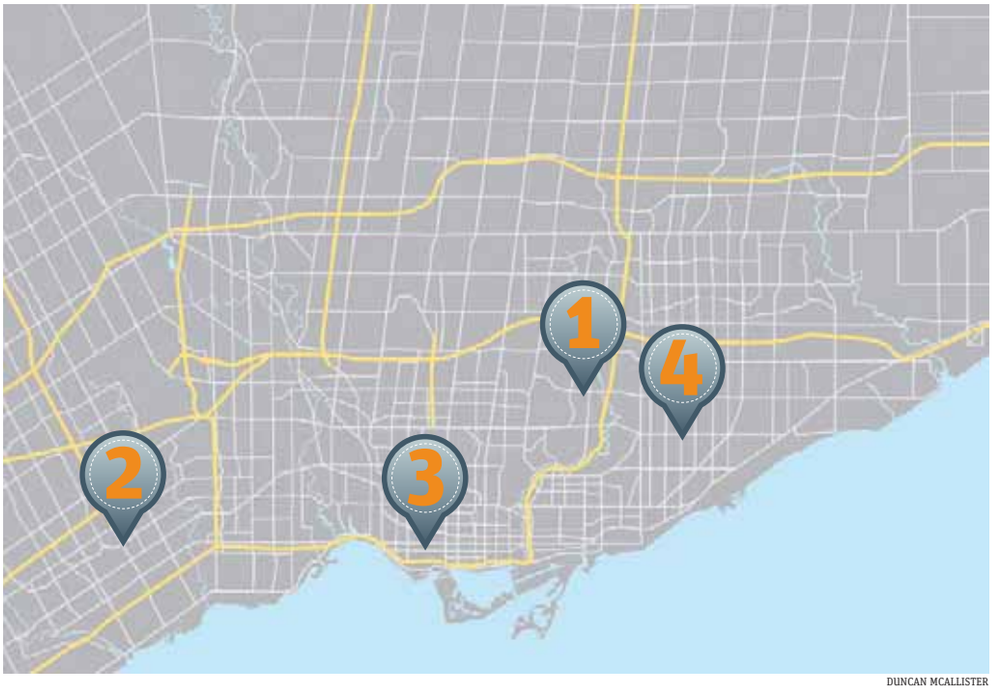
When the Province of Ontario passed the Places to Grow Act in 2005, it called for an emphasis on intensification to help accommodate the growing number of new residents making the GTA their home, which is forecast to be more than 100,000 each year. With the population growing, our industry needs to build between 35,000 and 40,000 new homes annually to ensure that these new residents have a place to live. One of the most visible results of this change in public policy is the shift toward higher density developments and the constrained land supply in the regions surrounding the City of Toronto. Ten years ago, 75 per cent of the new homes sold in the GTA were ground-related and 25 per cent were high-rise homes. Last year, 62 per cent of new homes sold were high rise and 38 per cent were ground-related.

Over the years, members of our industry have grown to refer to this situation simply as the shift. When newsmakers reported that the number of housing units currently under construction is above its historical average, they missed the fact that a decade ago, the majority of homes sold and constructed were ground-related as opposed to condominiums — a direct result of public policy as our industry implements Places to Grow.

A typical condominium building holds approximately 300 units and takes between three to five years to build. That means there are 300 units in the "under construction" phase for up to five years! Compare that to your typical detached home, usually built in under one year, and you begin to see the effect of the shift.

The GTA currently has 226 new condominium projects under construction, which are 88 per cent sold. This is a healthy number and the increased quantity of unsold units is due to the fact that the past few years have seen some record-setting condominium sales. We need to put an end to these negative headlines by looking at the whole picture, which shows a condominium market that provides quality, affordable homes to first-time buyers, small families, downsizing baby-boomers and new Canadians.

What's hot on the condo market



DUNCAN MCALLISTER

1. North York

Flaire Presentation Centre: Porsche Design pop-up shop, at the Shops at Don Mills, 6 Pabst Lane. Dec. 14 from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.

CONTACT: CALL 416-445-8868 OR VISIT FLAIRECONDOS.COM

2. Mississauga

Open House: Spacious Mississauga condo, three bedrooms, two bathrooms, 50 Mississauga Valley Blvd., Dec. 15 from 2 to 4 p.m.

CONTACT: CALL 905-270-8840

3. Downtown

Open House: DNA downtown condo, two bedrooms, two bathrooms, 1005 King St. W., Dec. 15 from 2 to 4 p.m.

CONTACT: CALL 905-821-3200

4. East end

Open House: East end townhome, two plus one bedrooms, two bathrooms, 740 Kennedy Rd., Dec. 15 from 2 to 4 p.m.

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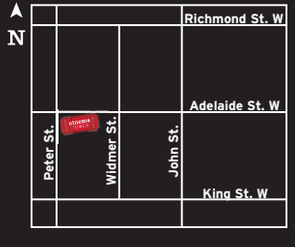

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On the move? Think about calling the professionals

Two Men and a Truck.
DIY moves can make the most stressful day in a person's life even worse

CONDO TRENDS
Duncan McAllister
life@metronews.ca

So you're ready to make the big move to your next condo. Should you move yourself or enlist the services of a professional?

You can pack your own possessions, hire a truck and enlist the services of your reluctant friends and save some money.

But many people would prefer the peace of mind afforded by a turnkey solution where the mover does it all. After all, a typical two-bedroom condo contains a lot of delicate and expensive cargo.

Some do-it-yourself moves go well, but others can go awry because of unanticipated events.

A professional moving company can help you with as much or as little of the packing and unpacking as is required and several companies will advise you and provide a full range of packing supplies.

It's important to plan ahead and arrange with the building management at both ends to book elevators and loading docks.

And always expect the unexpected. No amount of preparation can prevent something from going wrong. Remember that you are personally responsible for any damage caused to common area hallways and elevators as a result of your move. Professional movers are licensed and insured and have all the proper freight handling equipment.

Eva Szypulska is the president of Toronto's Two Men and a Truck. The professional moving outfit boasts 3,500 movers and 1,400 trucks nationwide with 20 local franchises in Ontario.

"I think our mentality about the business is very different. I realize we provide a moving service, but our business is about customer service," says Szypulska about the most stressful day in a person's life.

Quoted

"I realize we provide a moving service, but our business is about customer service."
Eva Szypulaska

"A lot of things go wrong on that day and our job is to make that hardest part the quickest and easiest."

One of the things that really differentiates Two Men and a Truck from any other moving company in Canada is the Mikey On Board program.

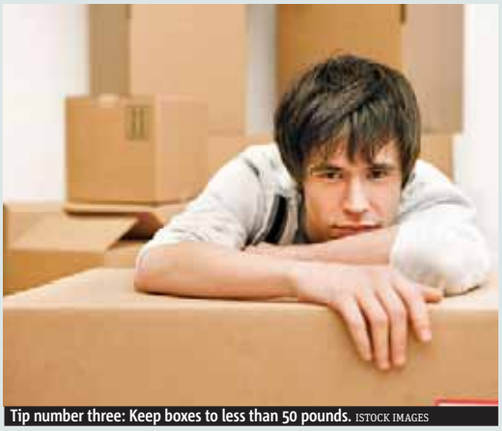
"What we've decided to do is we've put a Mikey defibrillator on every vehicle that's out there. We're actually training the majority of our staff so they know how to use the machine in case something happens," says Szypulska.

The challenge is now to other companies that have vehicles out in the community to do the same thing.

Eva Szypulska, president of Toronto's Two Men and a Truck shows a Mikey defibrillator, carried on board each of their moving trucks. DUNCAN MCALLISTER/FOR METRO

Eva's packing checklist

- When you are packing for your move, use strong boxes and containers that can be secured tightly.
- Pack audio-video equipment in their original boxes.
- Avoid loading more than 50 pounds into one box.
- Remember to pack a box of basic household supplies that you may need on moving day.
- Don't pack paint, bottles of bleach, gas cans or other flammables.
- Have rugs and draperies cleaned before packing them.
- Don't pack important documents, money and jewelry in the moving truck.
- Label each box on the top and sides.
- Save room by using towels and blankets to wrap fragile items.



Tip number three: Keep boxes to less than 50 pounds. ISTOCK IMAGES

Cleaning

Holiday spills? Check the napkin stain chart

I hate dealing with dinner napkin stains, so I tend to use paper instead, but my family hates paper napkins and is always pushing me to use my cloth napkins. First, is it OK to use paper and secondly if I use my cloth napkins how do I get the food stains out?

CHARLES THE BUTLER
askcharlesthebutler@metronews.ca
For more, visit charlesmacpherson.com

As the hostess, you can use what ever you like. Paper or cloth, it's your choice. However, cloth is always so much nicer.

So here are a few tips to make life easier. Remember, when washing your dinner napkins, you need to get the stain out before they end up in the dryer, so keep a close eye out for this.

Soaking your napkins overnight with the formulas below also really helps. Also, remember to always treat the stains as soon as possible.

Cloth napkins are nicer, but more difficult to clean. ISTOCK IMAGES

Christmas napkin stain chart

Gravy
Scrape off excess, blot with paper towel, soak fabric for several hours in one cup cold water and one tablespoon liquid enzyme detergent. Rinse with clear water and launder normally as per fabric label.

Cranberry Sauce
Scrape off excess, rinse with lukewarm water, sponge with solution of a quarter teaspoon of PH neutral dish soap and half a cup of warm water. Rinse with clear water and launder normally as per fabric label.

Lipstick
Scrape off excess, dampen stain with PH neutral dish soap and rub stain between thumb and forefinger, rinse with warm water, repeat until stain is removed and launder normally as per fabric label.

Chocolate
Scrape off excess, rinse from the back and rub a liquid enzyme detergent into chocolate and let soak for 30 minutes in cold water, then rinse and launder normally as per fabric label.

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Turntable to coffee table: Vintage holiday decor

Forget Bing Crosby's classic White Christmas. For me, Christmastime will forever be evoked by David Cassidy crooning My Christmas Card to You, and I still have the 1972 Partridge Family holiday record album to prove it.

The music has long since been transferred to my iPod, but the rest of my family can stand only so much of Cassidy's oddly melancholy rendition of Frosty the Snowman. So I came up with another way to get my fix of nostalgia: I reproduced the album cover art on a tile coaster that now resides on my coffee table, not my parents' old turntable. In fact, I had enough vintage albums to make a set of four holiday coasters, and at a cost of 15 cents per tile, can afford to make more to give to my sister.

But why stop there? I'm also awfully fond of my 1973 Little Golden Book versions of Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer and Frosty the Snowman, and I get out my battered copies every year. But the books end up lost amid my son's enormous collection, so I came up with a way to make them part of our holiday decor.

Instead of shrinking the covers as I did for the albums, I enlarged them a bit to fit 8-by-10-inch canvases and hung them on the wall. Slapping a print into a frame would be even easier, but I had the blank canvas on hand and didn't want to buy a new frame. I may be a hopeless sap during the holidays, but I'm also thrifty.

Record album coasters

Materials

- Record album covers
- Scanner or digital camera
- Printer
- Craft knife and metal ruler or scissors
- Spray adhesive or adhesive tape (I used a Scotch-brand Advanced Tape Glider)
- Ceramic tiles, approximately 4-by-4 inches
- Clear enamel topcoat (I used Rust-oleum Crystal Clear Enamel)
- Felt, cut to the size of the coasters

Instructions

1. Take a picture of your album cover. Scanning it would also work, but most small, desktop scanners won't be big enough to scan the entire cover in one pass. It's best to stand the album up on a shelf against a wall, so you can get a straight-on view for a photo.

2. Use photo-editing or word-processing software to crop and re-size the image to fit your tile. Print the image, then trim it to size using the craft knife or scissors.

3. Use adhesive tape or spray adhesive to glue the image to the tile. Many online tutorials call for using Mod Podge, a type of decoupage medium, for this kind of project, but I find it messy. And because it is water-based, the finished coasters likely will not stand up to moisture or heat from a cold beverage glass or warm mug.

4. Allow adhesive to dry thoroughly, following product directions. Working outdoors, apply several light coats of the clear enamel spray, again following the product directions for how long to wait between coats.

5. Glue squares of felt to the underside of the tiles to prevent the rough surface from scratching your table.

6. Allow the finished coaster to dry for at least several days before using.

A handmade drink coaster inspired by vintage Christmas albums.
HOLLY RAMER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A decorative wall hanging inspired by vintage Christmas books.
HOLLY RAMER/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Book cover canvases

Materials

- Vintage books
- Scanner or digital camera
- Printer
- Craft knife or scissors
- Spray adhesive or adhesive tape
- Blank 8-by-10-inch canvas
- Optional: acrylic craft paint

Instructions:

1. Scan or take a picture of your book cover. If scanning, scan at a high resolution (600 ppi) so you can print an enlarged copy without harming the image quality. If taking a picture, use the highest resolution on your camera.

2. Use photo-editing or word-processing software to crop and re-size the image to fit your canvas. (Alternatively, you can simply create a duplicate image that you can print and frame).

3. Print the image, then trim it to size. I chose to print my book cover on high-quality photo paper to get the best image possible.

4. If desired, paint the edges of the canvas a colour that matches your book cover. Let dry.

5. Use adhesive tape or spray to glue the image onto the canvas.

6. If desired, spray the finished canvas with a clear sealant. I chose not to, since it will be hanging up for just a few weeks each year, and I wasn't particularly worried about the image fading or getting damaged.

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DIY DECOR TIP: UPCYCLED HOLIDAY BULBS

STEVEN AND CHRIS HOLIDAY EPISODES ARE NOW AIRING THROUGH DEC. 24, MONDAY TO FRIDAY AT 2 P.M. THEIR ROSTER OF EXPERTS DELIVER IDEAS AND ADVICE ON TOPICS INCLUDING HOME DECOR, FOOD AND ENTERTAINING, HEALTH AND FITNESS AND MORE.

It happens every year: You untangle your holiday lights only to find that half aren't working.

Don't toss 'em out quite yet; upcycle those burnt out bulbs into a fabulously festive centerpiece!

Materials

- Holiday light bulbs
- Various shades of glitter, divided
- White glue
- Artist's brush
- Large Decorative bowl
- Fake snow

Don't just throw away those burnt-out Christmas lights. SUBMITTED

Directions

1. Decant various shades of glitter into separate bowls.
2. Using a small artist's brush, apply glue to the entire glass portion of each bulb.
3. Dip bulb in one of the bowls of glitter and roll around, ensuring that glue is completely covered with glitter.
4. Repeat steps two and three with remaining bulbs.
5. Allow bulbs to fully dry separately before displaying together in a large decorative bowl on a bed of fake snow.

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Heading out of town this Winter? A checklist for closing up house

Vacationing. From holding the mail to turning down the heat

The flights have been booked, the suitcases retrieved from the attic and your vacation itinerary has been set. But while your mind may be ready to wander to a faraway land, don't forget about home sweet home just yet.

Securing your home and making it look occupied while you're away on a winter vacation will help deter thieves. And some simple preparations can save you the anguish and expense of returning home to find damage if something like a dishwasher hose decides to fail in your absence.

"If you look at how long it takes compared to repairing the potential damage, it seems much easier to take the precautions than it does to make the repairs," said Richard Stone, a University of Minnesota Extension educator in housing technology.

Here's a checklist for closing up the house properly before you go:

Daily Check
Arrange for a friend or neighbour to check on the house at least once a day (and feed the fish or water the plants). Give that person a copy of your itinerary and contact numbers. Ask that they call the police if they see or hear anything out of the ordinary.

Mail/Newspapers
Have the mail held, or ask a neighbour to take it in.

Cancel newspaper deliveries and ask your neighbour to take in any unexpected holiday packages, notices of delivery attempts that may be left on your door or free publications tossed on the driveway.

"That's a sure sign that you're not there, when all that stuff starts accumulating at your house," said Ernie Long, the crime prevention co-ordinator for the Aventura Police Department in Florida.

Snow removal
If you don't have a contract for regular snow removal, arrange for somebody to clear your driveway and sidewalk if there is a storm. The house will look occupied if the driveway is cleared, plus that allows any emergency crews closer access to your home. Students may want the job, but find out if they have their own equipment or need access to yours.

Security
Lock all windows and doors and set your alarm if you have one.

The police also might be able to check on your house daily. If your department has one, register with its "vacation watch" or "dark house" list.

"We will periodically go by and check your house to make sure everything is on the up and up," Long said. "Just about every police department offers some kind of vacation watch."

Lights
To make your house look lived in, put lights on timers to mimic your typical routine.

Long said he'll set his living room timer to go on in the evening for a bit, and then he'll set a bedroom light to go on for an hour before his usual bedtime.

Exterior motion lights are highly effective in deterring crime because, as Long said, "You can't sneak up on them."

A man carries his neighbour's newspaper to her doorstep in Havertown, Pa. JACQUELINE LARMA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Your cell phone can be used as a home security monitor. PROTECTION ONE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Locks and Doors
The back door should have a high-security lock and a strong door frame. Long recommends replacing short screws with 3 1/2-inch wood screws to reinforce the strike plate on the door, making it harder for a criminal to kick it in.

"You need to have good-quality locks, but the door frame is just as important, especially on the back door," he said. "Studies have shown that if you delay him two minutes, he'll go somewhere else."

Valuables
The first place robbers go in a home is the master bedroom, Long said, where they are after money, jewelry and guns.

If you have a big stash of cash or an expensive jewelry collection, he recommends storing it at a bank safety deposit box and storing any weapons in a gun safe. If you hide valuables in your home, be creative, Long said. Place them in a coffee can, painted black and attached to the floor joists overhead in the basement, for instance.

Thermostat
If you're leaving a cold weather clime, you can turn the heat down in your home, but don't turn it off altogether, since that could cause damage from frozen water pipes.

Stone recommends going no lower than about 15 C. Even at that temperature, the exterior walls, which may have less, or no, insulation in those outer walls.

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Christmas card clutter solutions

DESIGN CENTRE
Karl Lohnes
home@metronews.ca

If you are the popular type then you probably get lots of Christmas cards sent to you each holiday season.

One of the most asked questions I get during the holidays is what to do with the cards and how to creatively display them.

I remember as a kid my Mom would string them up across our window in the living room. She'd poke them into the edges of painting and mirror frames; basically ridding them of tabletops in order to make room for trays of hard candy and nuts.

I've seen cards lined up on mantels, window ledges and credenzas, stuck to the fridge door and draped on a ribbon around door frames.

For a family home that might look charmingly chaotic, it's important to create order with decor, and greeting cards are no exception.

As a designer type, I am always conscious of displaying things around my home that add to my decor — especially during the holidays. Here's a few ways that inspire me to proudly put those warm wishes on display.

Jolly Reindeer Photo Holder

At almost three–feet tall, I'd stand this hand-painted fellow in my front foyer as a greeter to guests when they arrive. $40, pier1.ca.

Card Keeper

Got keepsake cards? Store them away neatly (it's also a good way to remember who sent you cards from year to year). $12, crateandbarrel.com.

Holiday Card Holder

Organize 60 cards horizontally on a hallway wall or vertically beside the Christmas tree. $65, potterybarn.com.

Idea: lay your holiday greeting cards in a decorative tray and display on a coffee table. Allow guests to sift through them as desired.
PHOTO: SUPPLIED

Greeting Card Etiquette

- Display your cards into common groups: work related, family and friends.
- At the end of the season, gather all cards and store them with holiday decorations for next year. You'll then have an auto-list of people to send cards to.
- Up-cycle last year's extra-beautiful cards and use the front plackets as instant name tags for gifts. Just make sure there is no writing on the inside front.
- If someone sends you a card and its too late in the season to return one to them, send them a "thank you for thinking of me card" in the new year.
- Always include your return address on the envelope and sign the card with your first and last name. This ensures the receiver knows who it came from.

Paper or pixels? Are e-books or real books greener?

QUEEN OF GREEN
Tovah Paglaro
green@metronews.ca

Simple questions rarely have simple answers, and this is no exception. With a reported tie between adult e-books and traditional hardcovers, we all want to know which is actually greener.

But the experts are as evenly split as the sales!

The methodology used to determine this sort of thing is called Life Cycle Analysis. It takes into consideration the environmental impact of a product from production right through to disposal. This isn't a simple matter of equating trees saved to energy used.

Nor is it categorically equal across brands of readers and publishers of books. The problem with broad generalizations is that they reduce our capacity to consider nuance.

A small-scale printer engaging primarily in direct sales, using recycled paper, vegetable-based inks and ecologically conservative business practices doesn't have the same footprint as a printer who takes a less conscientious approach.

To make matters more complicated, some e-reader producers have been quiet about their environmental position — not divulging lists of ingredients or manufacturing information — while others (probably the green leaders in the field) have edged closer to transparency.

Are we then to judge one industry by its model citizens and another by its full spectrum?

A better approach is to consider individual cases and make practical decisions based on the facts.

For example:

Case A: Fred already has an e-reader and wants books for Christmas.

Solution A: Buy him electronic books!

Case B: Maya doesn't have an e-reader. She too wants books for Christmas.

Solution B: Scour the second-hand bookstores for that perfect find. Fun!

Case C: Kamal is an avid reader with too many books … and he wants more.

Solution C: Urge Kamal to make use of the public library, where books — virtual and traditional — can be borrowed for free! Bake him cookies instead.

With books — as with everything — we would do well to consider the three Rs sequentially: reduce, reuse, recycle.

Reduce new purchases by borrowing books from the library. It's the greenest option. Second to that, buy quality. The longer an e-reader lasts — or the more efficient the printing methods used — the less the environmental cost of your purchase.

Reuse books by buying used. If the person on your list is a purist addicted to the texture and smell of real books, they'll undoubtedly appreciate the inherit character of a used book.

Recycle books that are just collecting dust on the shelves by donating them to charity. Engaging in a sharing economy is recycling at its best.

E-books and traditional books are nearly split in sales — but which are better for the environment? ISTOCK IMAGES

Anitra Mecadon, host of DIY Network's Mega Dens. HANDOUT

Creating guest bedrooms where there aren't any

DIY ideas. Make guests feel welcome at your home this holiday season and into the new year

With the holidays around the corner, preparing for overnight guests is inevitable.

Rather than looking at your lack of guest suites as a challenge, consider these ideas for incorporating guest beds into functional living spaces.

Hideaway beds
Fold up the hideaway bed stereotype in your head — newer versions of this classic space saver are both more comfortable and easier to use.

Including one of these in a contemporary cabinet provides an attractive solution for overnight guests without taking up any additional space.

Wall dividers
Make the most of a room by using a wall divider to separate a guest bedroom from a room you are already using such as a home office or gym.

Using mirrored panels or patterned dividers make the room stylish for your use and your guests when they arrive.

Small spaces
Look at the unused nooks and crannies in your home that could be serving a more creative purpose.

For instance, building a simple platform underneath the stairs can easily provide room for a futon or air mattress without invading the space you already have.

Trundle beds
Doubling as a great solution for kids' sleepovers, a trundle bed is two beds that take the space of one. The second bed is tucked underneath and rolls out when needed.

This is a great solution for additional guests that doesn't take up any extra space in your home.

Moveable partitions
If you have no choice but to sleep guests in high traffic areas of your home, installing a partition will provide the necessary privacy.

Consider moving bookshelves or glass doors that will keep an open feeling and won't entirely divide the overall room.

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With all the hustle and bustle at this time of year, take time to relax with the family and watch a movie. Have a supply of snacks on hand for those wintry nights when you want to catch a holiday flick. GOODSHOOT/THINKSTOCK

Holiday film fest

EILEEN FISHER
YummyMummyClub.ca

With cold wintry days and Christmas craziness calling out for people to stop and take a break, watching a favourite holiday movie is something that every kid loves to do.

My kids are no different, and there are certain holiday movies that are pretty much guaranteed to make them stop, drop, and sit for a bit. With all of the hustle and bustle at this time of year, relaxing is something we sometimes forget to do.

Here are some of my family's favourite Christmas movies and the reason why we always have a supply of movie snacks on hand in our kitchen during the whole month of December.

Will Ferrell as Buddy in the movie Elf. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Elf

Over the past few years, this movie has quickly beat out all of the others as our family's favourite one to watch at Christmas.

It's got a funny innocent charm about it that just makes you smile the minute you see Will Ferrell. The humour in the film appeals to all ages, and it has an awesome message. And, no, the message is not, "We elves try to stick to the four main food groups: Candy, candy canes, candy corns, and syrup." Quotes by Buddy are standard around this house in December.

National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation

This movie is the inspiration behind everything to do with Christmas lights and family gatherings.

It's also the reason why I refer to my husband solely as "Clark" for the whole month of December.

If it's Christmas Eve and the rooms of your house are filled with family members who are eating all of your food, trashing your kitchen and setting your tree on fire, you have just become a Griswold.

There's no sense fighting it — embrace it.

A Christmas Story

"You'll shoot your eye out!" Can you believe this movie was made almost 30 years ago? The kids love this movie because of how it portrays Ralphie using his "inside voice" to talk about what he really thinks of all the unreasonable aspects of Christmas. Like wearing a pink bunny suit or having your dad obsess over a lamp shaped like a lady's leg. I wonder if Ralphie eventually ended up in therapy?

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HOW CAN I THROW A PARTY WHEN I DON'T HAVE ANY WINE GLASSES?

You won't have to find out...
Holiday time is here and you have a bunch of invites for parties, but you're feeling a bit reluctant to reciprocate because your home isn't holiday party ready? At Cry If I Want To you can get your home on this year's "must visit" list with a couple of key items every home entertainer should have.

Break Resistant Crystal Glasses
We all know how outrageous a party with friends can get. Don't be afraid to bring out your best crystal no matter how rambunctious your friends are. Schott Zweisel crystal offers beautifully clear crystal glasses that are extremely resilient.

Beverage Tub
Keep your drinks chilled in style and your party elegantly casual with this option that is perfect for the self-serve bar. Can be used without the stand right on your drinks table or with the stand to free up valuable table space.

Find these items and other entertaining essentials at Leslieville's Cry If I Want To.

Visit Cry If I Want To during the Artist Showcase and Holiday Open House today Thursday December 13th 6 to 9 PM or Friday December 14th from 1 PM to 6 PM.

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Don't miss winter's beauty

Outdoors. Resist the urge to hibernate during this great time

As temperatures drop, many Canadians are tempted to enter a sort of hibernation, abandoning the outdoor activities they love in favour of nights spent in the warmth of home.

While the days may be shorter, you can still take advantage of the sunlight and enjoy the many parks, trails and conservation areas that are found across Canada.

"The Canadian landscape is breathtaking all year round, and Canadians should get outside and enjoy the beautiful natural environment no matter what the season," says Mary Desjardins, the executive director of TD Friends of the Environment Foundation.

"However, it is important to be mindful of the natural environment when enjoying the great outdoors, especially if we want to protect it for generations to come."

Here are some tips for Canadians looking to explore the great outdoors this winter:

• Maintain a zero footprint while outdoors to help keep the environment pristine. Take all garbage with you, and don't disturb the natural environment any more than is necessary.

• Watch your step, and be sure to stay on marked trails. Many nature areas maintain marked trails — complete with guide signs and posts. Staying on marked trails will keep you from getting lost, and ensure you're not venturing onto marshes, protected habitats and other dangers that may be hidden beneath the snowfall.

• Stay hydrated. Be sure to drink plenty of water, especially if you're jogging outdoors during the winter. While you may not sweat as much as you do in the summer, it is important to keep hydrated when you plan to be outdoors for long periods of time.

• Bring a map, guidebook or mobile phone with you. If you are exploring an area for the first time, if the weather worsens, or you become disoriented you can find your way to safety.

NEWS CANADA

Stay active this winter. NEWS CANADA

Party time. Try these tips for your holiday bash

Whether you're hosting a party for 30 or 300 people this holiday season, it's important to plan and prepare leading up to the big day.

Selecting the menu, creating the holiday décor, and ensuring the space is spotless before guests arrive, is paramount. Here are some tips and tricks for hosting the perfect holiday party:

• Start with a colour theme: red and gold or white and silver are both perfect for a holiday party. Incorporate these colours into everything from your invitations to your decorations.

• Create vignettes throughout your home by grouping candles, ornaments, and flowers in the most visible spaces.

• Save yourself the mess and use an artificial tree. Artificial trees look just as good as the real ones so your guests won't be able to tell the difference.

• Good lighting is a must. Use lights on dimmers or consider adjusting the lighting with candles. There's no such thing as too many candles — don't be shy about using votives, pillars, and tapers everywhere.

• Sit down dinners can be intimidating so set up a variety of food stations instead. Set up a turkey carving station and let people help themselves to sides and stuffing.

NEWS CANADA

Good lighting is a must at a holiday party. EYE CANDY IMAGES/THINKSTOCK

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Cake creations keep kids busy

The new boss. Next time your kids are bored, give them some Play-Doh and a cake challenge

SHARON DEVELLIS
YummyMummyClub.ca

Tony Danza used to be "the boss." Or there's Bruce Springsteen.

Nowadays, there's a new boss in town. It's Buddy Valastro, the uber-talented cake creator/decorator/owner of Carlo's Bakery, and thanks to a little network called TLC, he is known to the world as the Cake Boss.

We don't watch a lot of television at our house but there are a few shows we watch together as a family: America's Funniest Videos, Antiques Roadshow, Wipe Out, and, of course, Cake Boss.

The boys are addicted and love watching Valastro create cakes that defy gravity (and sometimes don't). But they especially love the spin-off series — The Next Great Baker — where, for eight episodes, Valastro had a competition to find a new baker for Carlo's bakery. Each week Valastro threw new challenges at the 10 contestants as they vied for a chance to win $50,000 and work at the famous bakery.

This has spurred a new activity for my kids.

Cake Boss: The Play-Doh Edition

I wish I could take credit for this, but my husband came up with the idea when the kids brought out their mounds of Play-Doh after dinner one night. Essentially, one of us is "The Boss" and we tell both of our sons what kind of cake to make.

Example: We would like a cake that represents Lego. It needs to be layered and able to feed 20 to 30 people. You have one hour.

Then we set the timer and let the boys create. Bonus: My husband and I have one hour to do other things while they are at the table stretching their Play-Doh and imaginations. Once I was able to dye my hair while they made Valentine's Day-inspired cakes. And just the other day I managed to vacuum the entire house, including under the couches. Which, ironically, is where I found half of their missing Lego pieces. I wonder how many pieces our central vacuum system can suck up before it actually explodes.

So the next time your kids are bored and need something to do, grab some Play-Doh and go show them who is really the boss.

Once you have assigned your kids with a cake challenge and set the timer, you will have one free hour to yourself. ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK

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SPORTS 4

Cut deep: Roster trim looms at junior camp

World juniors. Top teenagers running out of time to make impressions with final selections expected Thursday evening

Canadian goalies Laurent Brossoit and Jake Paterson chat following an exhibition game against the University of Alberta Golden Bears on Wednesday in Calgary. JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

There will be tears. There will be anger. There will be disappointment.

It won't be easy, but Team Canada coach Steve Spott will whittle his junior roster to 23 players. The final cuts — players who have always been the best on their teams — are expected Thursday night.

Don Hay, coach of the Vancouver Giants and a two-time Team Canada world junior coach, doesn't envy Spott's position.

"You see tears. You see disappointment. You see anger. You see all the things that go with human emotions," said Hay, who coached the entry last year and in 1995. "You obviously feel for that young man, going through all those different feelings and then (having to) face the media. He's got to compose himself fairly quickly before he goes out and speaks.

"It's a tough 10 or 15 minutes for everybody involved."

For those who remain, there's a team photo Friday, then a flight Saturday to Finland for exhibition games prior to the puck dropping on Boxing Day for the world junior hockey championship in Russia.

Those who don't make the roster will be whisked off to the airport for flights back to their respective teams. Few of the hopefuls have ever been cut by any team before.

Defenceman Mathew Dumba missed out last year.

"It sucked," he said. "It's a terrible experience. I got cut and I didn't fulfil my dream."

Spott is putting his own mark on how things are done. For one thing, the cuts are coming in the evening, not the morning. For years, the deed was done via 6 a.m. phone calls.

"It's not the most enjoyable thing in the world," said defenceman Jesse Blacker, now with the AHL's Toronto Marlies, who was cut from the 2011 team. "You can't really sleep. They called me at 6 o'clock to let me know that I had been cut, that I wasn't making the team. It's disappointing."

Blacker doesn't think the timing will leave players any less nervous, though.

"They're still going to be nervous in camp throughout the day," said Blacker. "The main goal is to play throughout the day without the nerves. Go out and show them what you've got, do what you can do. Don't leave yourself doubting that you gave it all you could."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Quoted

"I got away from my game last time. I was trying to prove to everyone how my defensive game had evolved.... I got away from my offensive side, which is why I got invited."

Kitchener Rangers defenceman Ryan Murphy, who has twice been cut at world junior camp.

First round of cuts

The Canadian junior men's hockey team released five players from its selection camp Wednesday.

- Defencemen Adam Pelech and Derrick Pouliot and forwards Francis Beauvillier, Sean Monahan and Tyler Graovac were cut, dropping the number of players competing for 23 spots on the team to 32.
- Four goalies, 10 defencemen and 18 forwards remain. Nine more hopefuls are expected to be released Thursday.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Three famous omissions

1 Sidney Crosby

The Penguins superstar is arguably one of the best hockey players in the world. Few will forget his gold-medal goal for Canada at the 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. But Sid the Kid was left off the 2006 roster as the Wayne Gretzky-run squad decided to go with a veteran team.

2 Michael Jordan

Long before Air Jordan was great, he was cut from his high school team in the 1978-79 season. As a five-foot-11 sophomore, he was considered too short. He made the junior team and never looked back, starring at North Carolina before lifting the Chicago Bulls to six NBA titles as a pro.

3 Kurt Warner

Few gave this former grocery-store stockboy much of a chance in the pros. But despite being undrafted and spending four years trying to make the NFL, Warner went on to become one of the league's most prolific passers, winning an MVP and Super Bowl crown in 2001 with the St. Louis Rams. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Casey to Raps: Time to pull on 'big boy pants'

NBA. Toronto coach vows to give everything he has to help team progress

Five players injured and one suspended. A horrendous road trip with five straight losses. Fourteenth place in the Eastern Conference.

The vultures are circling the Toronto Raptors, a miserable 4-19 after Wednesday's visit by the Brooklyn Nets.

"It just sucks that we've got bad luck everywhere," leading scorer DeMar DeRozan said succinctly.

For Raptors coach Dwane Casey, the advice to his players is simple.

"This is when you have to pull your pants up — I think I heard the term 'big boy pants' — and be ready to play," Casey told reporters after the team's morning shootaround.

"That's where I am. I'm a fighter. I'm a scrapper. I'm still with this team. We're working hard.... I'm not shying away from this challenge and this opportunity."

An injury-depleted roster hasn't helped matters. Casey's injury list includes Andrea Bargnani, Kyle Lowry, Linas Kleiza, Alan Anderson and Landry Fields.

Amir Johnson was suspended for the Brooklyn game after throwing his mouthpiece at an official during Monday's loss in Portland.

Casey expected to have just eight healthy players available for the Nets. The number went up, however, with the arrival of rookie forward Quincy Acy from the Bakersfield Jam of the NBA Development League.

Casey, who believes his team is probably three to five wins better than the standings show, says coaches and players alike have to endure the attention and speculation that accompany such a slide down the league table.

"We live in a glass bowl. I live in a glass bowl. That's part of the territory when we sign up," he said. "So we're all men.

"And I've explained that to players. You've got to perform — trade rumours, firing, whatever it is — we all have to perform. We have a job to do. And we can't go in a shell and say 'Please go away, please go away.'"

Like Casey, general manager Bryan Colangelo is under the spotlight as the team sputters.

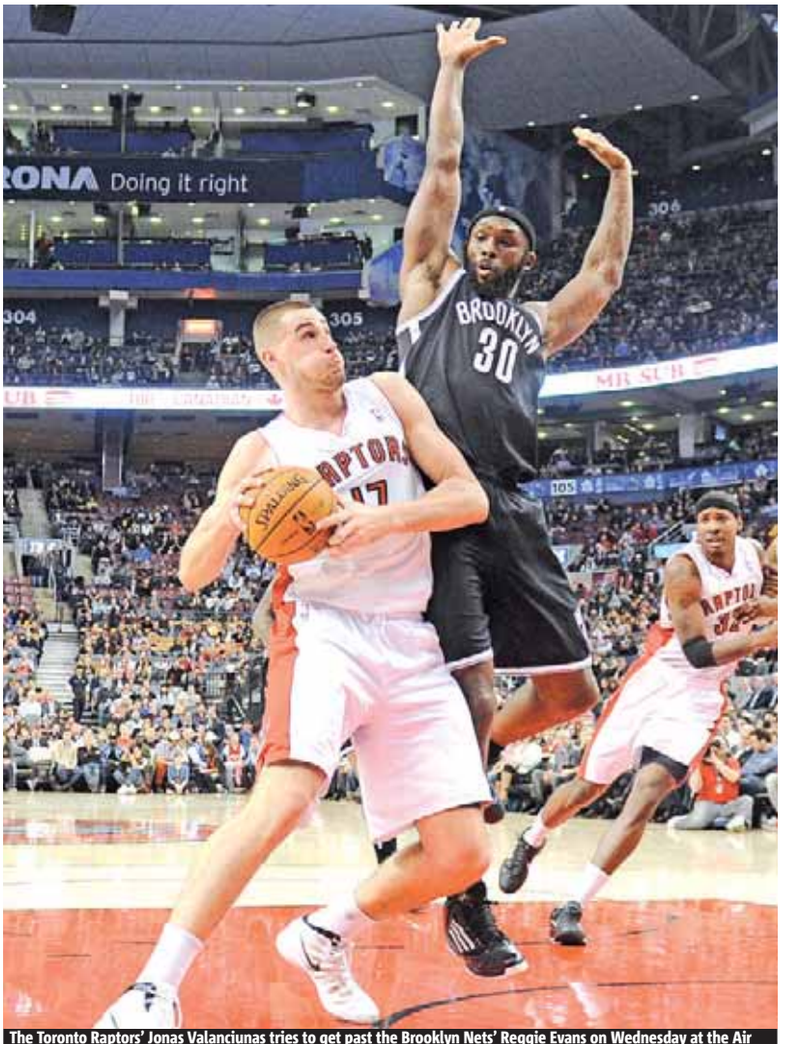
Colangelo spoke out on the recent road trip, calling the team's play unacceptable, disappointing and embarrassing. Rather than the team's talent level, he pointed to "lack of focus, attention to detail, consistency of competing."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Wednesday's game

Nets	Raptors
94	88

- Toronto lost its sixth straight game as the team returned home after a five-game West Coast road trip.



The Toronto Raptors' Jonas Valanciunas tries to get past the Brooklyn Nets' Reggie Evans on Wednesday at the Air Canada Centre. Toronto lost 94-88. CARLOS OSORIO/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Former Bills RB Lynch to face old team in Toronto

Seattle Seahawks running back Marshawn Lynch gets to face his old team the Buffalo Bills at Rogers Centre on Sunday. OTTO GREULE JR/GETTY IMAGES FILE

Marshawn Lynch won't have to prepare for a frosty reception Sunday in his Buffalo Bills homecoming.

The veteran running back will face Buffalo for the first time since being dealt to the Seattle Seahawks in 2010. But the Bills' 2007 first-round pick will do so in the relative comfort of Rogers Centre and not the cold, rainy conditions that are forecast for Western New York.

"We won't miss that day at (Ralph Wilson Stadium)," Seattle head coach Pete Carroll said with a chuckle during a conference call Wednesday. "We'll be just fine."

Buffalo dealt Lynch to Seattle in October 2010 following two off-field incidents. But Lynch is apt to receive more cheers than jeers when introduced at Rogers Centre on Sunday.

Since 2008, Bills players have complained while Buffalo is the home team at Rogers Centre, the atmosphere in the domed facility doesn't come close to replicating the loud, ear-splitting support the team gets at Ralph Wilson Stadium. Toronto fans have often been as boisterous in their support of the visiting teams as they have for the Bills and playing indoors has removed two big challenges of playing in Orchard Park, N.Y., at this time of year — cold weather and swirling winds.

"The atmosphere is different and I think everybody knows that," Bills quarterback Ryan Fitzpatrick said. "It's much different than the Ralph in terms of the noise and intensity and all that.

"But we're going to have more fans there than they will and we have to be able to take advantage of that."

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Bills in Toronto

- The game is the last under the inaugural Bills Toronto Series agreement, which saw Rogers Communications Inc. pay the Buffalo club $78 million US to stage three exhibition and five regular-season games at Rogers Centre.
- The deal is expected to be extended through 2017.

MLS

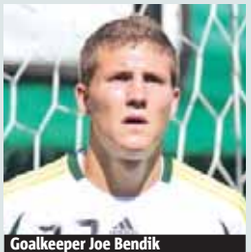
TFC trades players with Portland and trims salary cap

Toronto FC continued its remake Wednesday, dealing forward Ryan Johnson and goalkeeper Milos Kocic to the Portland Timbers.

In exchange, the worst team in MLS gets goalkeeper Joe Bendik, the third-overall pick in the 2013 SuperDraft and allocation money.

It offers Toronto flexibility while moving on two players who were looking for a new start. In trading Johnson, Toronto also trims its salary cap — the 28-year-old Jamaican international made $137,813 US last season.

THE CANADIAN PRESS


Goalkeeper Joe Bendik
GETTY IMAGES FILE

NFL

Funeral held for former Chiefs linebacker Belcher

Jovan Belcher was remembered Wednesday for the accomplishments of a life that ended so suddenly and violently.

Several hundred mourners gathered for the Kansas City Chiefs linebacker's funeral near his hometown on Long Island. The 25-year-old Belcher shot and killed his girlfriend on Dec. 1, then drove to the Chiefs practice facility and committed suicide in front of team officials.

Pastor Dawn Mixon shared that Belcher's mother, Cheryl Shepherd, described him as a "humble, kind young man."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tennis

"It was a great season but I'm working to continue to grow and develop as a player."

Milos Raonic, who won Tennis Canada's male player of the year award for the second straight year. He ended the season No. 13 in the ATP rankings.

Toronto Marlies defenceman Jake Gardiner, who has concussion-like symptoms, hasn't hit the ice since Saturday. TARA WALTON/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Concussion-like symptoms keep Gardiner off the ice

Marlies. But coach refuses to call young blue-liner's injury a concussion

Jake Gardiner has been a quick learner ever since he stepped immediately into a full-time role on the Leafs blue-line, and he's continued what appears to be an all-star-calibre campaign with the Toronto Marlies during the lockout.

Gardiner, though, is now learning about the virtues of patience when dealing with a head injury.

The 22-year-old absorbed a heavy blow to his head Saturday in a game against Rochester, heavy enough to force the Marlies to exercise every caution before letting him back on the ice.

"The hit came from the other side, he (Gardiner) had gone in at the side of the net to retrieve a puck and the other player came in from behind the net. He (Gardiner) got flung and there was contact with the face area. We'll keep on top of it and whether it's a neck or a concussion, we won't have him back out there until he is ready to go," Marlies coach Dallas Eakins said.

Toronto is practising all week in preparation for games this weekend, but Gardiner has yet to return to the ice since the second-period hit Saturday.

Gardiner is showing concussion symptoms, but Eakins says the injury is not being called a concussion.

"He's good, but it's funny with these (hits to the head), they're all different and every player is different. Some guys get knocked out cold and lay on the ice but get up and are fine, and some get a brush and are out for a long time," Eakins said.

"He (Gardiner) got hit from behind, he didn't see it coming. He got a big whiplash, but he finished the play and the period, and he scored a goal. Between periods he said it was stiff (neck), and he didn't feel right. Headaches and things like that are symptoms of concussions and we're not saying he has a concussion.

"He's improved every day and every day he is better … but he's still having a pain in his neck and the headache is still there a bit. Just that feeling, he doesn't quite feel himself. So we held him out and we will continue to do so until he is 100 per cent right."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

By the numbers

17

Jake Gardiner has nine goals and eight assists for 17 points through 22 games this season with the Marlies.

Latest lockout meeting sees no progress

Following an NHL board of governors meeting Dec. 5, commissioner Gary Bettman travels to address the media in New York City. BRUCE BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES FILE

The latest round of NHL labour talks ended with the two sides not even getting into the same room with each other.

The players' association and league negotiators met separately Wednesday with federal mediators in suburban New Jersey, holding discussions that didn't immediately appear to have moved the sides any closer to a deal to save the hockey season.

There was hope going into Wednesday that negotiations could get back on track to the point they were last Thursday before talks fell apart.

Quoted

"I thought the gap would be closed much quicker, but it hasn't come to fruition yet, so we have to keep working"

Brendan Morrison, one of 13 players to attend the latest talks on Wednesday.

When the NHL agreed last week to increase its make-whole offer of deferred payments from $211 million US to $300 million it was part of a proposed package that required the union to agree on three nonnegotiable points. Instead, the players' association accepted the raise in funds, but then made counter-proposals on the issues the league stated had no wiggle room.

NHL commissioner Gary Bettman then said that the offer was being pulled from the table. However, mediators informed the union on Wednesday that the proposal was still available, but it carried a take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NHL

Locked-out players to play charity game

Tampa Bay Lighting forward Steven Stamkos and P.K. Subban of the Montreal Canadiens will lead teams of locked-out NHL players during a charity game next week at the former Maple Leaf Gardens.

The game will be held next Wednesday at Ryerson University's new Mattamy Athletic Centre, located inside the building the Toronto Maple Leafs called home from 1931-99. The proceeds will benefit the NHL Players' Association's Goals and Dreams fund and RBC's Play Hockey initiative.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Top players

Former NHLers honoured with Order of Hockey

Paul Henderson, Dave King and Mark Messier were named to the Order of Hockey in Canada on Wednesday.

The 2013 class will be honoured by Hockey Canada in April at a ceremony in Ottawa during the 2013 IIHF women's world hockey championship.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Mark Messier has 1,887 points in 1,756 games over 25 seasons. ELISE AMENDOLA/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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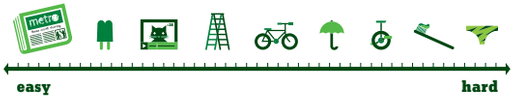

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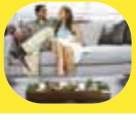


Horoscopes

Aries
March 21 - April 20
Focus on what you are good at and forget the rest. If you play to your strengths, you will soon be on the road to fame and fortune. Stop listening to what everyone else is saying and do only what motivates you.

Taurus
April 21 - May 21
Chances are you will have a flash of insight today that reveals how you can earn big money in the not too distant future. Don't forget though that the future depends a lot on what you do right now, so get busy.

Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Today's new moon is sure to bring changes in one or more important relationships. Whether they are the kind of changes you enjoy remains to be seen but they are certainly changes that are needed, so don't fight them.

Cancer
June 22 - July 23
The more you do now, while you are in the mood to work, the less you will have to do later when you are not. Just remember that you don't have to do something simply because everyone else is doing it.

Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
A new moon in the most creative area of your chart gives you the kind of confidence you need to move mountains. Both in your personal life and at work you are capable of great things, so don't sell your talents short.

Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
Sometimes it is smart to let your rivals win and this could be one of those occasions. If it gives them the impression that you are losing your grip, it will make it easier for you to win the battles that count!

Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Someone you meet today could become more than just a friend, so get up and get out into the world. If a stranger catches your eye, follow it up with a smile and a chat. One thing leads to another.

Scorpio
Oct. 2 04 - Nov. 22
You need to come to a decision today about a money matter and the planets will make it easy for you. There is really only one option on the table that is worth pursuing, so commit to it and make it pay.

Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
A new moon in your birth sign means you will find it easy to get your way over the next 24 hours. Does that fill your head with all sorts of outrageous ideas? It should! There are no limits (for you).

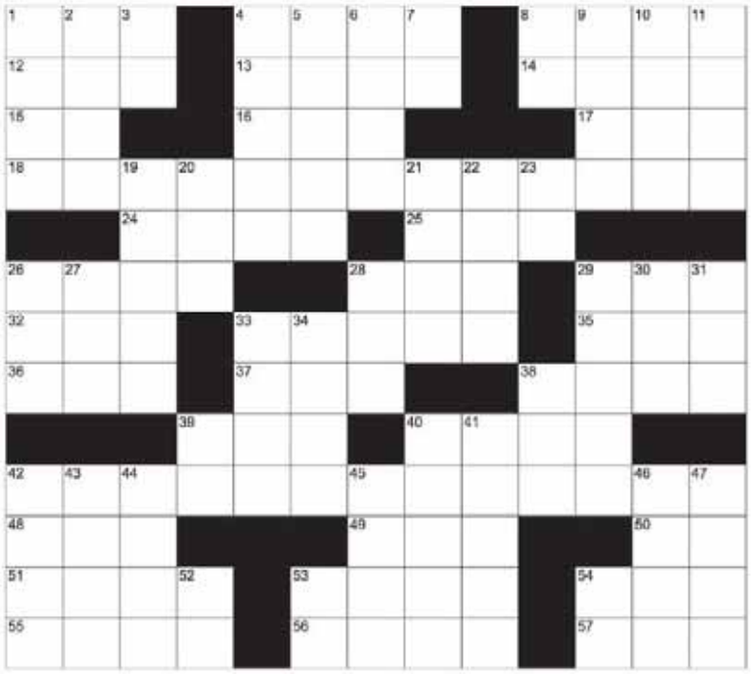
Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
How and why did you allow yourself to get worked up about something so trivial? Whatever the reason, you must now stand back from the situation and see it for what it is: a minor inconvenience, nothing more.

Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You will need to choose between one group of friends and another today. Your time is limited and you can only do justice to one set of commitments, so choose wisely. You can make it up to your other friends later.

Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
Don't get so carried away with your plans and big ideas that you overlook the little things on which they depend. Remember: genius is 10 per cent inspiration and 90 per cent perspiration – yes, even for a Pisces. **SALLY BROMPTON**

Crossword

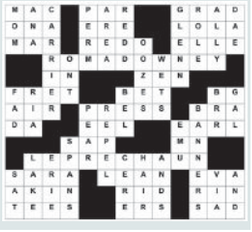
BY BETTY MARTIN



Across
1. Nightmare street
4. Ruse
8. Asian nurse
12. Cocoon
13. Comic/actress Tomlin
14. Ward of Once and Again
15. Musical group: — Vogue
16. American Music Awards (abbr.)
17. Refusals
18. 1970's Dick Van Patten series (3 words)
24. Toward sunrise
25. Sanford and —
26. Planet nearest but one to earth
28. — Paulo, Brazil
29. Coffee container
32. Aspire
33. Repeat over
35. Oath affirmation (2 words)
36. Speech hesitation
37. Runner
38. The — Griffith Show
39. Coupe or convertible
40. Send forth
42. Beatles hit song (4 words)
48. Stout
49. Boathouse item
50. Medical drama which starred George Clooney
51. Emily of New —
53. Small branch
54. Form of address
55. Hang
56. Model MacPherson
57. Capone and Capp

Down
1. Fencing sword
2. Burt Reynolds ex.
3. Marcus Welby, —
4. Some shoes
5. Margin
6. Woe is me!
7. — Wife and Kids
8. – The World Turn
9. Restaurant offering
10. Like a bump on – – (2 words)
11. Jumble
19. Bacteria
20. This Hour — 22 Minutes
21. Actor Morales of NYPD Blue
22. Lunch time for many
23. "Strangers – a Train"
26. Screen siren West
27. "— America"
28. Droop
29. Mottled bean
30. The — Couple
31. Christmas trinket
33. Type of horse
34. Wise one
38. Be indisposed
39. Hartford state.
40. High-tech message
41. Unite
42. Sleep under the stars
43. Salve plant
44. Inert gas
45. Wail
46. Bridal accessory
47. Goofs
52. Fargo state
53. — Diem
54. Peru's continent (abbr.)

Yesterday's Crossword



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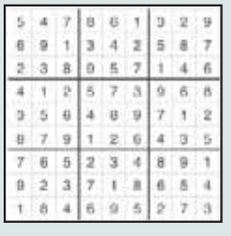
		8	2		4	6		
	2		7		6		5	
6								8
		5	4	2	1	9		
		3	9	5	8	4		
2								6
	3		5		2		9	
		4	3		7	1		

Yesterday's Sudoku



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℠The Hyundai names, logos, product names, feature names, images and slogans are trademarks owned by Hyundai Auto Canada Corp. †Finance offers available O.A.C. from Hyundai Financial Services based on a new 2013 Elantra L 6-Speed Manual/Elantra GT GL 6-Speed Manual/Sonata GL Auto/Santa Fe 2.4L FWD Auto with an annual finance rate of 0%/0%/0%/0% for 24/24/48/24 months. Bi-weekly payment is $298/$365/$214/$524. No down payment required. Cost of Borrowing is $0/$0/$0/$0. Finance offers include Delivery and Destination of $1,495/$1,495/$1,565/$1,760 fees, levies, and all applicable charges (excluding HST). Finance Offers exclude registration, insurance, PPSA and license fees. Delivery and destination charge includes freight, P.D.E., dealer admin fees and a full tank of gas. Financing example: 2013 Sonata GL Auto for $22,200 (includes $3,500 price adjustment) at 0% per annum equals $214 bi-weekly for 48 months for a total obligation of $22,200. Cash price is $22,200. Cost of Borrowing is $0. Example price includes Delivery and Destination of $1,565, fees, levies, and all applicable charges (excluding HST). Example price excludes registration, insurance, PPSA and license fees. ▼Fuel consumption for 2013 Elantra Sedan L 6-Speed Manual (HWY 5.2L/100KM; City 7.1L/100KM)/2013 Elantra GT GL 6-Speed Manual (HWY 5.3L/100KM; City 7.8L/100KM)/2013 Sonata GL Auto (HWY 5.6L/100KM; City 8.7L/100KM)/2013 Santa Fe 2.4L FWD Auto (HWY 6.7L/100KM, City 10.1L/100KM) are based on Manufacturer Testing. Actual fuel efficiency may vary based on driving conditions and the addition of certain vehicle accessories. Fuel economy figures are used for comparison purposes only. †♦Friends & Family prices for models shown (includes $2,000/$1,805/$3,225/$1,250 in price adjustments): 2013 Elantra Limited/Elantra GT SE Tech 6-Speed Auto/Sonata Limited/Santa Fe 2.0T Limited AWD is $22,830/$26,175/$27,475/$39,145. Prices include Delivery and Destination charges of $1,495/$1,495/$1,565/$1,760, fees, levies, and all applicable charges (excluding HST). Prices exclude registration, insurance, PPSA and license fees. ♦Friends & Family Selling Prices are calculated against the starting price less all factory to dealer price adjustments (including Friends & Family price adjustments). Friends & Family Selling Prices include Delivery and Destination, fees, levies, and all applicable charges (excluding HST), and exclude registration, insurance, PPSA and license fees. ‡Factory to dealer price adjustments (including Friends & Family price adjustments) are calculated against the vehicle's starting price. Factory to Dealer Price adjustments of $2,000/$1,850/$3,500/$1,150 available on 2013 Elantra L 6-Speed Manual/Elantra GT GL 6-Speed Manual/Sonata GL Auto/Santa Fe 2.4L FWD Auto includes Friends & Family price adjustments. Factory to dealer price adjustments are applied before taxes. Offer cannot be combined or used in conjunction with any other available offers. Offer is non-transferable and cannot be assigned. No vehicle trade-in required. †♦‡Offers available for a limited time, and subject to change or cancellation without notice. See dealer for complete details. Dealer may sell for less. Inventory is limited, dealer order may be required. ◊Based on Natural Resource Canada's 2012 ecoEnergy award for most fuel efficient full-size car. ††Hyundai's Comprehensive Limited Warranty coverage covers most vehicle components against defects in workmanship under normal use and maintenance conditions.